CULTURE BY CONVERSATION

ROBERT WATERS

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BY

ROBERT WATERS

Author of "Intellectual Pursuits," "Life of William Cobbett," "John Selden and his Table-Talk," etc.

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To the Memory of My Late Friend

MAGNUS SCHOEDER

TO WHOSE CONVERSATION I OWE MORE
TRUE EDUCATION THAN TO ALL THE
BOOKS I EVER READ

"Reading is a rich source of knowledge; observation is still better; but conversation is the best of all!"

—*Eastern Proverb.*

"A single talk across the table with a wise man is better than ten years' study of books."—*Confucius.*

"The first duty of a man is to speak; that is his chief business in this world; and talk, which is the harmonious speech of two or more, is by far the most accessible of pleasures. It costs nothing; it is all profit; it completes our education; it founds and fosters our friendships; and it is by talk alone that we learn our period and ourselves."

—*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

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A PREFATORY WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

It was the talks at the Twilight Club (New York City)—to which "institution" the author devotes an entire chapter—that first awakened him to the importance of Conversation as a means of Culture and intellectual development; for by the talks at this club he had learned more of the living thoughts and movements of the day, more important and mind-quickening truths, than he had ever learned or could have learned in any other school. These talks created in him an intellectual life, an awakening to the true sources of knowledge, a desire to excel in speech and expression, which scarcely anything else could have produced; and all this without any effort whatever on his part, except listening and occasionally speaking in the course of the discussions.

So he wrote for a New York journal several chapters on Conversation as a Means of Culture, which were so well received that he determined to complete the work when time and opportunity were afforded.

This volume is the result. Not more, however, than one-fifth of the book has ever appeared in print before. So that, with the exception of the chapter on the Conversation of Authors, that on the Twilight

Club (without the specimens), and a few others that have been remodelled, the work is entirely new and original.

The chapters are addressed chiefly to those younger and more progressive men and women who desire to make, in the exercise of their calling or profession, the most of all the means at their command for larger culture, wider knowledge, more numerous ideas, and greater efficiency in the exercise of their powers. And as no other work exists, so far as the author knows, that shows the immense and many-sided advantages of Conversation, the author's hope is that it will afford many a useful suggestion, many a hint of practical value to that large class of people who are striving for culture while earning a living.

I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. William Heinemann, the London publisher, for an interesting passage from "Real Conversations," by Mr. William Archer.

R. W.

West Hoboken, N. J.
June, 1907

INTRODUCTION

CONVERSATION, CULTURE AND SCHOLARSHIP

It is a strange thing that although there have been written, within the last twenty-five years, more books on education, mental, moral and physical, than perhaps in all the years before, scarcely anything has been written on Conversation as an educational factor. And yet, as the writer proposes to show, no agency is more powerful in the development of the mind, in the gaining of culture, in the formation of character, in the creation of ideas, in the inspiration of literary workers, and in the achieving of professional and social success, than this little-prized intellectual exercise.

Some writers, indeed, have not only failed to see the importance of conversation as a factor in education, but have coolly spoken of it as a "lost art," without any regret whatever at the "loss." Their idea of education is mastering problems in mathematics, learning languages, and studying grammar, rhetoric and history. The study of these subjects is of course cultivating and beneficial; but the study of books for a specific purpose never yet formed the mind of any man. Books are dead things compared with the living speech of men and women. The inner being, the

mind and heart, are nearly always shaped by intimate and familiar conversation, which, springing spontaneously and naturally among friends and acquaintances, operates unconsciously in forming the character, in inspiring thought, in shaping one's aims and ambitions, and in creating a desire for intellectual expansion. Now this is the highest kind of education; it goes deeper, makes a more permanent impression, develops the mind more surely, than books ever do. If this be a "lost art"—and in some circles it certainly is—then the sooner it is recovered and restored, the better.

The great ages in the world's history, the intellectual ages, are those in which conversation was most highly prized and assiduously cultivated. Every scholar knows that the age of Pericles, when Aspasia formed that brilliant circle which included Socrates and his friends, when the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were being put on the stage, and Phidias was chiselling his immortal works in the Parthenon, was unmatched for conversation. The age of Queen Elisabeth, that of Queen Anne, and that of Louis XIV. are distinguished as ages of conversation, and consequently of high culture and great literary activity. In fact, the age of Elisabeth, the greatest in literature, is generally spoken of as "the age of conversation"—the first, perhaps, in which people met expressly for conversation—for who has forgotten the gatherings at the Mermaid, where Shakespeare

and Ben Jonson had their "wit combats," and among whose members were Raleigh, Beaumont and Fletcher, John Selden and several other famous men? Of the talk of these men it has been said that when they departed they "left an air behind them which alone was able to make the next two companies right witty." The age of Queen Anne, when Swift, Addison, Pope and Steele lived, is famous for the clubs and conversation of the time; and as for the age of Louis XIV., when Racine, Molière, Corneille, Madame de Sevigné and a host of other celebrated people lived, it is well known that this age of fine conversationists and eminent writers is the most distinguished in the annals of France. And in our own American history, what period excels in intellectual activity, in great writers—poets, novelists, philosophers and orators—that in which those famous conversers, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Henry Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the Channings lived? Was not this a period when men and women lived who, by their conversations, stirred and filled the minds of their contemporaries with new ideas, high thoughts, noble conceptions, and philosophic theories, such as were never heard before? Was it not a time of intense intellectual activity?

Those were the times, ancient and modern, when intellectual fires burned brightly, when noble minds were forging new and grand conceptions into masterpieces of art and literature, which have fed the world ever

since, and when the things of the mind were more highly esteemed and carefully studied than those of the body. Conversation is indeed the greatest of all sources of inspiration, the most stirring and impressive of all influences, and thousands of people owe all their success in life to their power of grasping new conceptions or new suggestions thrown out in conversation.

The great teachers of modern times, too—those men who became masters in their art, like Arnold of Rugby, Thring of Uppingham, and Horace Mann of Massachusetts—were men who knew the value of conversation as an educational factor; men who, by familiar talks with their teachers and scholars, impressed new and vital truths on their minds, and inspired them to high thinking and noble living. The conversation of these men formed a protest against the rule-mongering, machine-teaching of their time, and it was they who introduced those new views and better methods in the art of teaching which, though old as the time of Socrates, have since been called the "new education."

Mr. Thring's definition of education—"the transmission of life from the living, through the living, to the living," is perhaps the best possible definition of true conversation. "Tutors," said Mr. Buckle, the historian of civilisation, "generally teach too much from books and too little by word of mouth; hence the tendency is to overwork children; hence the great

proportion of weak-minded adults. I teach these boys in conversation," said he, speaking of the sons of his friend, Mr. Huth, "in a quarter of an hour more than they would otherwise learn in a week."

It must be borne in mind that culture and scholarship are two distinct things, and that the one does not necessarily include the other. A man may be a profound scholar with very little culture; or he may be a highly cultured man with very little scholarship. A man of culture must be a man of the world, accustomed to mingle in good society, and familiar with good literature. A profound scholar may be a man apart from the world, a closet student, a recluse, unaccustomed to society, not caring for it. Such a man, with all his knowledge, may be awkward and uncouth in manner, shy and oppressed in the presence of strangers, and unable to express himself with any degree of force or fluency in conversation. The man of culture is at home in any society, is universally esteemed, and nearly always successful; while the mere scholar, devoid of culture, is seldom much esteemed and rarely quite successful. High culture and profound scholarship are indeed sometimes combined in the same person; and where this is found, perfection is nearly attained. But how few are the examples of such perfection!

At the present day, too much stress is laid upon scholarship and too little upon culture; too much upon knowledge derived from books and too little

upon knowledge derived from intercourse with the world; so that conversation as a means of culture is hardly ever thought of, while scholarship or book-study is over prized and over done. The latter may fill the mind, but it does not necessarily form either the head or the heart.

In the best circles of Europe, the value of conversation, not only as a means of recreation but of education as well, has long been known and appreciated. Most Europeans of the better class cultivate and practise conversation much more than Americans do. They look upon it as a means of polish and refinement; as an accomplishment more necessary than book-learning; as the means of perfection in culture. So that the art of conversation forms a more important branch of education among them than it does with us. They regard it as one of the chief things in the formation of character, in the making of a lady or a gentleman, and as the crowning achievement in social intercourse. They find leisure for it, time to cultivate it, and inclination to practise it; in fact, they would hardly think life worth living without acquiring some skill and power in the delightful art of conversation.

In America, we are so intent on work, on rapidity and despatch in business, on post-haste in all our affairs, so impressed with the idea that "time is money," that we can hardly afford to spend any of it in mere conversation. Even in social, as well as in business circles, conversation has become among us as much of

a "lost art" as letter-writing is said to be, which is, in reality, when properly practised, a species of conversation.

In this book the writer endeavours to show, first, how much may be learned and how much pleasure and profit may be derived by listening to and partaking in conversation with cultivated people; and, secondly, how a fairly intelligent man or woman may become a good converser and an entertaining companion by conversing with people of good sense; and, as correlated and incidental to these two important points, the writer tries to point out what an important factor conversation forms in creating and suggesting new ideas, and how ability to keep one's end up in conversation is of value to any one, even in a purely business or professional point of view, by enabling him to make and strengthen business relations, and, if so inclined, in impressing his personality upon others, and thus advancing his political or professional fortunes.

That these are not purely pedantic and pedagogic ideas is shown by numerous examples from the experience of good conversers in various walks of life, whose conversational powers aided them materially in achieving the success or the eminence they attained in their profession or in their aims and objects in life.

This, therefore, is the aim of the present writer: to show by precept and example what a mighty factor in education and culture the practice of conversation

may be made; and to point out to the teacher and the student, the professional man and the merchant, the literary aspirant and the budding statesman, what golden opportunities for culture, for knowledge and wisdom, for a successful and beneficent career, lie within his grasp; and to indicate to all others what crowning advantages may be gained by this little-thought-of and little-cared-for practice of sincere and frank outpouring of the mind in familiar conversation, not only with well-educated people, but with men and women of all ranks and classes.

Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused.*—*Shakespeare.*

*Recently an awakening seems to have taken place among educators on this subject. President Woodrow Wilson of Princeton University has appointed a considerable number of preceptors and tutors, whose duty it is to instruct and inform the new students separately in familiar conversation, and aid them in all that they can do. "This," says President Wilson, "will be less burdensome to both teacher and pupil, more normal, less like a body of tasks, and more like a natural enjoyment of science and letters."

And Mr. Charles Francis Adams has lately made nearly the same contention. "Could I have my way," he said in an address before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Columbia University (June, 1906), "I would break our traditional academic system into fragments, as something which has long since done its work, and is now quite outgrown. I would get back to the close contact of mind on mind, and do away with this arm's length lecture system. I would develop an elective system based on scientific principles and the study of the individual."

PART I

EDUCATIONAL AND LITERARY INFLUENCES OF CONVERSATION

"Literature is the expression of the thoughts of society. Books are specimens of the conversations of an age, preserved in the spirit of taste and of genius."—*Thomas Henry Huxley.*

"Of all the arts which make existence desirable, the art of graceful and delightful conversation is the chief."—*Correspondent N. Y. Sun.*

CHAPTER I

WHAT MAY BE GAINED BY CONVERSATION

"What we do not call education is often more precious than that which we call such."—*Emerson.*

Few persons have any adequate conception of the measureless influence of familiar conversation on young minds. For good or ill, this is the one thing, above all others, that forms the minds and moulds the hearts of young people. For it is well known that in youth the mind is as wax to receive impressions and as steel to retain them. Young men at college, and even children at school, are more profoundly influenced by the familiar talk of their classmates than by the lectures or lessons of their teachers. This is why some wise men send their sons to a school or college where they know the influences of their associates are good, and from which they expect more than from their professors. "You send your boy to the schoolmaster," says Emerson, "but it is the schoolboys who educate him." His school companions come closer to him, speak their minds more freely, use plainer and simpler language, appeal to him more directly, than his teachers or professors; and the fact that each one participates in the talk has much to do with its interest and influence.

"Why is it," says Sam Slick, "that if you read to a man, you put him to sleep? Because it's a book, and the language ain't common. Why is it, if you talk to him, he will sit up all night with you? Because it's talk, the language of nature."

Most people look upon conversation as a thing of course, of no particular importance, scarcely deserving of any particular attention; whereas it is the one thing that deserves the most careful attention. Some one has remarked that he could not understand how James Russell Lowell, who was not noted for hard study at college, should have acquired such an immense stock of knowledge and such a marvellous power of expression as he subsequently displayed, not only in his writings, but in his conversation and speeches. The remark was natural enough, but the gentleman who made it seems to have been unaware or to have forgotten that Mr. Lowell belonged to a family which had for generations been noted for culture. He doubtless learned more and was more profoundly impressed by the conversation of his friends and kinsfolk than he could have been by his teachers or college professors. Even Daniel Webster declared that in his education, conversation had done more for him than books had ever done; and that he had learned more from the writers of books in conversations with them than he could possibly have learned from their writings. "Their minds in conversation," said he, "came into intimate contact with my own, and I absorbed cer-

tain secrets of their power, whatever might be its quality, which I could not have detected in their books."

And this, mind you, was said by a man familiar with the best literature of his time. How much did Shakespeare owe to a college education? How much did Molière? Or Robert Burns? Or John Bunyan? Or Patrick Henry? Or Henry Clay? These men, as shown in their lives, owed more to conversation than to any other means of culture. It was such men that Robert Ingersoll had in mind when he said that "a college is a place that dims diamonds and polishes pebbles." Everything depends, however, on the character of the college in which one studies; for a college professor may have a thorough knowledge of mathematics, or Greek and Latin, and yet have very little inspiration or intellectual life about him; while in every-day life we frequently meet with people without much learning who are brimming over with new ideas and inspiring thoughts. Many professors and schoolmasters, after acquiring a certain skill in their profession and a certain quantum of knowledge, stop there, having reached the acme of their ambition.

Look into the lives of those men and women who have attained eminence in some art or profession—the only lives of which we have any adequate record—and you will almost invariably find that the course their minds took, the professions they followed, and the motives that animated them through life, sprang from the conversation of some intelligent companion,

of some able thinker or speaker, among their early associates. We may see this frequently exemplified, too, in our best works of fiction.

No man who cares at all for intellectual development can afford to live in seclusion. He must, if he will not become a fossil, keep in touch with the bright men and women of his environment, and go forward with them in the progressive ideas of his time. Isolation leads to fossilisation; disuse to decay; for those powers left unused become finally, like the eyes of the fish in cavernous rivers, lost altogether. Conversation makes a man acquainted not only with the powers of others, but with his own, and with human nature generally. Robert Burns declared he never knew his own powers until he had measured them with those of others; and Molière said that when he had got into the Hotel de Rambouillet—a brilliant Court coterie of the day—he no longer needed to study classic authors; he had an abundance of real comedies and tragedies before his eyes, and needed no other material for his comedies.

What we learn by conversation is more than we ourselves are aware of. Let a reporter come and have a talk with you, and let him print it, and you will be astonished at the quantity of printed matter it makes. One can tell more in five minutes than one can write in an hour; and one can often, in a ten-minute talk with a friend, get the sum and substance of a ten-column article in the newspapers. I remember hear-

ing the whole of the celebrated Tichborne case, which filled many columns in the newspapers of the time, narrated to me so completely in a few minutes that I felt, on reading about it the next day, as if I were reading an old story.

"Society," says Oliver Wendell Holmes, "is a strong solution of books. It draws the virtue out of what is best worth reading, as hot water draws the strength of leaves." So that if you have a considerable acquaintance among intelligent reading people, you may learn much of that which is worth knowing in books without the trouble of reading them. Even of good books, no man attempts to read all; for the main things are contained in the few. Coleridge used to say that he could count on his fingers the books that are really worth reading. Of course this is an exaggeration, reminding one of the remark of a well-known society leader who declared that good society could be reduced to "four hundred." But there is a certain degree of truth in it. It is not necessary to read even the "one hundred best books" to be a well-informed man.

The thoughts of the world, of all literature, are running through the heads of the people you meet. Some men have a way of putting things that gives you a whole history in a few words. "Clever people," says Goethe, "are the best encyclopædias." What you have to do, when you talk with them, is to learn to draw them out. You can, if you are an adept in this

way, learn more, and get more fresh thought in conversation, than if you should read forty columns a day. Lord Palmerston declared, at a dinner in Paris, that he never read a printed book. How did he get his information? He got it all from the people he talked with and the documents he read. The great English premier, Gladstone, was noted for his ability to "pump people dry" of all they knew of the subjects they were familiar with. Socrates said that "a wise questioning is the half of knowledge."

And what you learn by conversation does not fatigue you as reading does; for you get tired of reading, but rarely of conversation. Men generally talk of what is uppermost in their minds. They are eager to tell you about some remarkable experience they have had, or some remarkable book or story they have read. And most men, when fairly dealt with, are ready for an exchange of wares. Nearly every one reads some special kind of books or periodicals. I have never known but one man in the course of a lifetime who had read the same books I had. And yet even from him I continually learned something new, because he had drawn from the same books quite a different nutriment from that which I had. He had, moreover, one quality in which I was deficient, the power of stating in a few words the substance of any book he had read. He had the knack of "tearing out the heart of a book" and laying it before you. Sometimes one gets in a single sentence a characterisation

of a whole book, or a whole convention of people. When a gentleman who had attended a dentist's convention was asked what he had learned there, he replied: "Well, of one thing I became firmly convinced, which is, that nearly all the ills that flesh is heir to come from neglect of the teeth!"

Sometimes in a single sentence one gets an excellent suggestion for a whole discourse. A clergyman who was passing through a village, in which were several of his parishioners, happened to speak to one, a woman, who was bleaching linen on the grass. Among other things he asked if she were at church last Sunday. "Oh, yes." "Do you remember the text?" "No." "Do you remember any of the points of the sermon?" She could not recall any of them. "Then what good did the discourse do you?" asked the clergyman. "Ah, doctor," she replied, "do you see that linen on the green? It does not look very well now; but by watering it from time to time it finally becomes white as snow!" He departed, feeling that he had got a lesson from that woman better than any he had taught her.

Coleridge says that "a good reader is like a worker in diamond mines; he casts aside all that is worthless, and retains only pure gems." My friend, above mentioned, was one of these diamond workers; he could give you the pure ore of any book in half an hour's talk.

For many books are nothing but the amplification

and exposition of a single idea. Where this is the case, a statement of its contents is comparatively easy. I heard a gentleman lately give, in two sentences, the sum and substance of Mr. Henry George's famous "Progress and Poverty." "You know," said he, "that nearly all the coal-producing land in Pennsylvania is owned by a dozen men, who, in order to keep up the price of coal, allow only a limited quantity to be dug out every year, and they will not sell an acre of this land, of which not one-hundredth part is utilised. What do you suppose is the tax on this land? Why, about seventeen cents an acre; that is all. Now, clap on this land, say $10 or $20 an acre, and you will compel them to sell part of it to others, who will mine it, and thus reduce, perhaps by one-half, the price of coal; and when the labouring man pays half as much as he now pays for fuel, are not his wages increased?"

I think it may be safely affirmed that any article or essay, speech, or address, whose contents will not lend itself to a condensed verbal statement, or of which one cannot grasp its leading thoughts so as to state them in a few words, is of no great value. It is one of those plants that have more leaves than fruit.

Take, for instance, Herbert Spencer's "Essays on Education," a work of great value. You would think it difficult to state in a few words the substance of these essays; but it is not. The essence of the whole book lies in the statement that we devote too much

time to the study of the ancient languages and literature, and too little to modern languages and scientific knowledge; too much time to dead grammatical forms, and too little to living scientific truths. These truths are illustrated, exemplified, and amplified in a hundred ways; so that the reader is profoundly impressed with them.

Take, again, Ignatius Donnelly's vast "Cryptogram," which contains over one thousand closely printed octavo pages, and which was heralded as the great revolution-making book of our times. This huge book is but the amplification of this one idea, that as we have no record whatever of Shakespeare's having received any school education, and as the plays attributed to him abound with evidences that the writer was a highly educated man, Shakespeare could not have written said plays; and that as many of the expressions and thoughts found in these plays are found also in the writings of his contemporary, Lord Bacon, who was a highly educated man, said Bacon must have written these plays. And to confirm this theory, a cipher is invented to suit the theory. This is positively all there is in that huge volume. How much time, trouble, and temper I might have saved had I learned all this from my book-condensing friend!

It is a good thing to have great readers among your friends, not only on account of the interesting things they may tell you, but also because they draw your

attention to the best books they have read, of which you would probably never otherwise have heard. At a time when so much poor stuff is printed, such information is exceedingly valuable. The press is now a Niagara, pouring forth vast streams of printed matter, most of which gradually finds its way back into the paper-mill, but the contents of which may generally be discovered in conversation with different classes of people.

Upon book reviewers one cannot always rely. Their reviews are often mere advertising puffs, and at best are very often unsatisfactory statements of the contents of a book. The reviewer frequently does not read through the book he reviews. He has so many books to review, he cannot do it. Who can blame him? When an editor gets a pile of new books on his desk, he is apt to dispose of them all in short order, half a dozen lines apiece. I have known this to be the case in several instances, even in widely circulated daily papers. And I have known the proprietor of a paper come to his literary critic and say: "I want you either to damn a book or praise it sky-high." "But that is not criticism, sir." "Well, never mind; that is what pays, and that is what I want."

CHAPTER II

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE INFLUENCE OF CONVERSATION

> "What a man says, be it true or false, has often more influence upon the lives, and especially upon the destiny, of those to whom he speaks, than what he does."—*Hugo.*

"In youth," says Walter Bagehot, "the real plastic energy is not in tutors or lectures, nor in books 'got up,' but in what all talk of because all are interested; in the argumentative walk and disputatious lounge; in the impact of young thought on young thought; of fresh thought on fresh thought; of hot thought on hot thought; in mirth and refutation; in ridicule and laughter; for these are the free play of the natural mind."*

* Probably no more striking example of the truth of this statement can be furnished than that shown by the twelve young men, called the "Cambridge Apostles," who, after graduating from Cambridge, met once a week for conversation and a supper, where they discussed freely some living topic of the day or read and discussed a paper written by one of them. Here they conversed freely, and here they spoke, both oratorically and conversationally, on the question in hand; and here they brought into play what they had learned in college or thought out in life; here they acquired that fluent, eloquent, and forcible power of expression which afterwards distinguished them. Just look at their names: Brookfield, Blakesley, Buller, Hallam, Kemble,

What is told us, especially in youth, sticks; it is impressed on the mind in a hundred ways—voice, tone, look, action, all speak together; while that which we read, or even that which is read to us, enters the mind only through the eye or the ear, and leaves but a comparatively faint impression. The language of conversation, being simpler and more natural than that of composition, is more easily comprehended, and carries the thought more readily into the mind. This is why Dr. Johnson's talk, as reported by Boswell, is so much more read and appreciated than any of his writings. He talked plain Saxon English, whereas he wrote in a highly Latinised style, which few but the learned care now to read. And this is why a spoken speech is a hundred times more effective than one that is read.

The great German poet, Goethe, had many bright and interesting companions in his youth; but he himself confesses that it was in his talks with a few of

Lushington, Maurice, Milnes, Spedding, Sterling, Tennyson, Trench, Venables. To show what they owed to this "Conversatione Society" (for so they first called themselves), one of them, Richard Chenevix Trench, declared, "I should look back upon my Cambridge career with mingled regret for wasted time, were it not for the friendships I have formed and the opinions I have imbibed (but for these I owe the University nothing); and among these connections I look upon none with greater pleasure than my election to the Cambridge Apostles, and trust that it will prove a connection not to be dissolved with many of the members during life." Quoted by Mrs. Brookfield in the "Cambridge Apostles."

those he knew at college, notably Merck and Lerse at Leipsic, Jung Stilling and Herder at Strasburg, and Jacobi at Pempelfort, that he was quickened into that intellectual life which made him what he was, a poet, novelist, and philosopher. So fond was he of talking with Jacobi that they were almost inseparable companions. He tells us himself that one evening, after they had talked late into the night, and had parted in order to sleep, they once more sought each other, and standing at the window, from which they could see the moonlight quivering on the throbbing breast of the Rhine, they continued their conversation long after midnight, and when they parted they did so with the feeling of an eternal union.

Patrick Henry is known to have received in his youth but a mere smattering of knowledge, and yet he seems to have sprung at one bound into the forefront of the world's great orators. It has been a subject of wonder to many how this could be. But to one who studies his life, the mystery may easily be solved.

Professor Moses Coit Tyler, the latest biographer of Patrick Henry, tells us that "from nearly all quarters the testimony is to this effect: that young Patrick was an indolent, dreamy, frolicsome creature, with a mortal antipathy to books, supplemented by a passionate regard for fishing-rods and shotguns; disorderly in dress, slouching, vagrant, unambitious; a roamer in woods; a loiterer on fishing-banks; having more tastes and aspirations in common with the trap-

pers and frontiersmen than with the toilers of civilised life; giving no hint nor token, by word or act, of the possession of any intellectual gifts that could raise him above mediocrity, or even lift him up to it."

But now mark what the professor tells us a little farther on: "Through a long experience in off-hand talk with the men whom he had thus far chiefly known in his little provincial world, with an occasional clergyman, a pedagogue, or a legislator, with small planters and small traders, with sportsmen, loafers, slaves, and the drivers of slaves, and, more than all, with those bucolic solons of old Virginia, the good-humoured, illiterate, thriftless Caucasian consumers of whiskey and tobacco, who, cordially consenting that all the hard work of the world should be done by the children of Ham, were thus left free to commune together in endless debate on the tavern porch, or on the shady side of the country store,—young Patrick had learned somewhat of the lawyer's art of putting things; he could make men serious, could make them laugh, and could set fire to their enthusiasms. What more he could do with such gifts nobody seems to have guessed; very likely few gave it a thought at all."

Will any one say that training of this kind could never have made him an orator? Of course, it had to be supplemented with reading and study; but if this training was not one that taught him to think, to speak, to reason, to argue, to reply, and one that stored his mind with moral, political, and economic

truths, with a knowledge of human nature and the rights of man, then there is no explaining the genius of Patrick Henry.

Books, the best of them, contain merely the experience of the writers or that of other people, gained from conversation and from other books; and Patrick Henry, having this at first hand, had it fresher and better than he could have had it from books. "Study men, not books," was his own advice in later years. He had learned from the people he conversed with more than he could have learned from any "hundred best books" that could have been selected for him.

All that we know of Shakespeare points to his having received an education of a similar nature—an education quite as irregular and defective as that of Patrick Henry. In his life the great dramatist figured at various periods among poachers and players, tavern-haunters and deer-stealers, fishers and farmers, stable-boys and tapsters, gamekeepers and ploughmen, gentlemen and noblemen, poets and playwrights, whose life and conversation revealed to him a great deal more than books ever did. Of course, he had read all the best books he could lay his hands on; he was undoubtedly a great reader; but he absorbed his infinite knowledge of human nature by intimate contact with all classes of people. Like Patrick Henry, he had learned all about men, their thoughts and ways and aims, by *talking* with them; and from this knowledge and practice, together with his reading, which

consisted chiefly of great books, Shakespeare had acquired or evolved that all-embracing knowledge of human nature, that marvellous power of expression, that wonderful insight, that eloquence and power of dramatic presentation, which he subsequently displayed so grandly in the maturity of his powers. So it was also with Patrick Henry.

Charles James Fox was another great orator and statesman who had an irregular education. Fox is famous for his charming manners, his benevolent disposition, his liberal political principles, his faith in the people, his masterful eloquence, and his defective "education." Sir Philip Francis, who knew him well, declares that "it is a great mistake to suppose that Fox was well educated;" "the reverse," says he, "was the case;" and he affirms that he picked up what he knew chiefly by conversation with educated people. "He grew," says Sir Philip, "like a forest oak, by neglect!" What a striking figure! Like the young oak, he drew nourishment and strength from all the plants by which he was surrounded.

Fox himself declared that he had learned more from the conversation of Edmund Burke than he had from all the books he had ever read. And it is said of him that when he entered Parliament he turned that august body into a debating club in order to perfect himself in the art of debate. But Fox had read more and was better educated than Sir Philip Francis gave him credit for. He could read Greek and Latin, and

in his college days must have studied a good many books. But it is well known that his father, who was fond of the society of able men, encouraged his son to shine in conversation, and in other social accomplishments. And the fact remains, that Charles James Fox, the mighty orator and much-loved man, owed more to conversation, in his intellectual equipment, than to any other source of knowledge or power.

Mind, I do not desire to disparage books or college training, but rather to show the value of conversation, from the practice of which so many men of ability have apparently drawn more intellectual nourishment than they ever drew from books or professors. "Not that I love Cæsar less, but Rome more."

Let me take one more striking example, that of a man who resembled Fox in many respects, and whose name is dear to every American—I refer to that admirable man and famous orator, Henry Clay, who was a charming converser as well as an eloquent orator.

Young Clay lost his father at a very early age, and when he had got but a slight knowledge of the three R's he was placed as a boy behind the counter in a retail store, where he remained for one year. After this he got a place in the law office of Peter Tinsley, not as a clerk, but as a sort of supernumerary, to do whatever he was called upon to do. But here, after a time, he learned to copy law documents, and when Chancellor Wythe wanted one of the clerks of the

office to serve him as an amanuensis, he picked out this lad, who is described as "a raw-boned, lank, awkward youth, with a countenance by no means handsome, but not unpleasing." I am sure the Chancellor saw something in that countenance that indicated a superior mind. Young Clay is further described as "wearing garments of grey Virginia cloth, home-made and ill-fitting," and his companions are said to have "tittered at his uncouth appearance and his blushing confusion" when the Chancellor selected him. But I must let the late Carl Schurz, his biographer, tell the story in his own words:

Young Clay began to attract the attention of persons of superior merit. George Wythe, Chancellor of the High Court of Chancery, who had often had occasion to visit Peter Tinsley's office, noticed the newcomer, and selected him from among the employees there to act as an amanuensis in writing out and recording the decisions of the Court. This became young Clay's occupation for four years, during which time his intercourse with the learned and venerable judge grew constantly more intimate and elevating. As he had to write much from the Chancellor's dictation, the subject matter of his writing (which was at first a profound mystery to him) became gradually a matter of intellectual interest. The Chancellor, whose friendly feeling for the bright youth grew warmer as their relations became more confidential, began to direct his reading; at first turning him to grammatical studies (of which the Chancellor saw, no doubt, that he was in great need), and then gradually opening to him a wider range of legal and his-

torical literature. But—what was equally if not more important—in the pauses of their work and in hours of leisure, the Chancellor conversed with his young secretary upon grave subjects, and thus did much to direct his thoughts and to form his principles. Henry Clay could not have found a wiser and nobler mentor; for George Wythe was one of the most honourably distinguished men of a period abounding in great names; and his conversation with his young secretary had undoubtedly been in a high degree instructive and morally elevating to him.

Had Mr. Schurz said "the means under Providence of making Clay the man he became," he would have come nearer the truth. Thus was the character and career of Henry Clay formed and fixed; thus was he directed, through the conversation of this able man, to the study of good literature and the mastering of those great principles of jurisprudence and constitutional law which he afterwards turned to such good account, and to the upholding of which his whole life was subsequently devoted.

It is generally those who have mingled much among men, like Clay and Fox, who have acquired that enviable power of making friends, of charming and attaching all who come within their influence, for which these men were noted. Most great statesmen have been merely admired and esteemed; few have been loved as Clay and Fox were. These men had learned to become easy and familiar with people of all ranks—in short, with the people. When an elector told Fox,

on one occasion, that he would rather vote for the devil than for him, the great statesman quietly replied, "Well, if your friend, the devil, doesn't run, may I count upon your vote?" and won his good will at once. When Henry Clay came among a party of sharpshooters firing at a target, they all cried, "Here comes Harry Clay; let him take a shot." He did so; and when his shot fortunately hit the bull's-eye, they cried, "A chance shot! a chance shot! Try again, Mr. Clay."

"No, siree!" cried he; "beat that first, and then I'll try again." That shot and his ready wit had made him more friends than twenty speeches would have made for him. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Constant intercourse with the world gave these two great political leaders that omnipotent tact, that winning address, which commands immediate attention where mere learning would discourse in vain. Of both Fox and Clay it may be said that they were educated in the school of "brilliant conversers and great books."

This, too, was one of the sources of the extensive knowledge and fine culture possessed by that famous old lawyer and statesman, John Selden, who, when he had come to the Inner Temple in London, found there (to quote the words of an old chronicler) that "it was the constant and almost daily habit of these traders in learning to bring their acquisitions in a common stock by natural communication (that is, by

conversation); whereby each of them became, in a great measure, the participant and common possessor of each other's learning and knowledge." Such were the great lawyers of those days; such was one of the ways in which they had acquired that wide knowledge and fine culture for which they are noted. And Selden himself became such an interesting and instructive talker that his table-talk was considered worthy of being taken down, and after three centuries it is still read and admired by students and scholars.

CHAPTER III

WHAT SOME MEN HAVE ACCOMPLISHED BY CONVERSATION

"A man was not made to shut up his mind in itself, but to give it voice and to exchange it for other minds."—*Channing.*

There is scarcely any sphere in life in which conversational power may not become of incalculable value. It is, in fact, the ladder by which the merchant, the lawyer, the physician, the clergyman, the politician gains the confidence of his fellow-men and attains the ends he aims at. The man of mere learning is of small account compared to the man who talks well; for such a man can, like the "Ancient Mariner," cast a spell on his hearer and compel him

To listen like a three years' child.

Like every other art, however, the art of conversation must be founded on knowledge and good sense. Some men have learned the art so well, they never speak five minutes to a stranger without making a friend of him; while others, who have never learned or cared to learn anything about it, hardly ever open their lips without making an enemy. The latter never amount to anything, while the former generally

attain everything they desire. Some, like Henry Clay, have the power of turning an enemy into a friend the moment they talk with him; while others only increase the enmity as soon as they open their lips. One of Mr. Clay's opponents absolutely refused to be introduced to him for fear he would become so fascinated by his conversation that he would be converted to his views, and thus be unable to oppose him in debate.

Let us take one or two examples in different spheres of life. A party of gentlemen came one day into a manufacturing establishment in Philadelphia, and, the proprietor being absent, one of his employees received them. This gentleman talked with the strangers in such a pleasant, amiable, entertaining way, that they were charmed with the man as well as with his wares; and at the close of the interview a card was handed to him with the request that he would call on the gentlemen in the evening. The visitors, who were a party of gentlemen sent out by the Emperor of Russia to acquaint themselves with the manufacture of machinery in America, made an offer to the young man to return with them to Russia, which he accepted; and it was not long before his courtesy and capacity gained him both fame and fortune in that far-off country.

When everybody else failed to draw a single copper from a wealthy man for a charitable object, Miss Dorothy Dix succeeded, by her pleasant manner and

persuasive speech, in inducing him to contribute not only thousands of dollars, but the very house in which he lived, to the cause which she advocated. She had attained by her conversation what the famous preacher Whitfield had attained by his eloquent discourses—power over the purse-strings as well as over the hearts of men. Eloquence in the pulpit is only a step higher than eloquence in the parlour. A good talker will generally make a good orator; for in order to gain his point in public discourse he needs only something of the practice before an audience that he has had daily before individuals.

When Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, one of the most successful and highly esteemed educators of modern times, entered one of his classes, all the boys brightened up; for they knew he would not only teach them something, but would converse with them in an interesting and cheering way. He knew how to reach the minds and hearts of young people; he knew how to touch their souls in a lively, piquant fashion, and inspire them with a love of all that is noble and true; so that by his fascinating way of teaching he not only poured knowledge into their minds, but aroused enthusiasm for virtue and learning, for truth and humanity, and made each of them a friend of learning as well as of their teacher for life.

Such a man, too, was Professor Mark Hopkins of Williams College, of whom one of his most distinguished pupils, President Garfield, said: "I could

wish for no better college than to sit on one end of a slab-seat with Mark Hopkins on the other." And William Walter Phelps spoke of Garfield himself, who, it must be remembered, had been a teacher for years, as "a teacher so gifted that his students compared him with Arnold of Rugby." Garfield's speeches, like his conversations, are full of inspiring and interesting passages. He *talked* to his hearers.

The greatest teacher of antiquity, the immortal Socrates, taught by conversation alone; he led his pupils on, step after step, by adroit questioning, until he enabled them to see the truth of the proposition, or solve the problem under discussion, by their own efforts. By plain talk, with homely similes, he aroused their interest in knowledge and philosophy, showed them its value, and made it plain and interesting to men of ordinary capacity.

But, indeed, a greater than Socrates taught the people in this way. The Divine Man chose this as the best possible method of teaching His world-redeeming doctrines; and thus His talks, as reported by His disciples, have moved the world to a greater degree than the words of any other man that ever spoke. This is how the great Teacher gave true culture to His disciples and His followers; this is how He enabled men to speak and write so wonderfully well. No other or no higher testimony to the efficiency of the conversational method can or need be presented.

Indeed, we Americans are only beginning to find out that one of the best means of culture, as well as one of the richest sources of recreation, is afforded by familiar conversation, by interesting talk with experienced, cultivated people. What else is the meaning of the daily increasing club-life that is going on among us? Is it not the feeling that this is the most cultivating and refreshing of all social and intellectual recreations? Here we find people with whom we can exchange views on things that interest us, with whom we can unburden our minds of things that puzzle us, as well as listen to those who wish to unburden theirs; here we can discuss live questions with living people, and thus refresh our souls more completely than we can in any other way.

Even the women are now having their clubs and organisations for intellectual improvement. They see that they are going to "get left" if they do not keep up with the men in this respect. For how can the wife, confined to her narrow home duties, and seldom seeing anybody but her children and her servants, expect to continue to be an attractive companion to her husband, who is every day conversing with people full of new ideas, new projects, and new departures, if she does not try to keep step with him? Seeing this, she wisely determines to make "Time give to her mind what he steals from her youth," and thus maintain her ascendency in her own sphere. With women, as with men, a wide acquaintance and a more extended

sphere of action give them more to think of, more to be thankful for, and more to speak of, and this saves them from the narrowing influence of the routine and humdrum duties of housekeeping.*

And now we see springing from Sorosis that remarkable combination called the Federation of Women's Clubs, and also the National Women's Congress! What next? There is only one woman's club in all France; but the women of America are not going to be behind the men in any respect. And in what other country are women so much respected as they are in America? In what country have they so much influence? They now vote in four States for all political officers and in several States for school officers; and they would be allowed to vote for all political officers and in all the States if they wanted to. They will probably do so some day. A chief justice of the Supreme Court (Brewster) has declared he "sees no

*In a recent number of a New York paper the following paragraph appeared:

"A careful inquiry into the literary organisations of Indiana shows that there are 108 women's clubs, 20 men's clubs, and 45 clubs including both men and women in their membership. Some of these literary clubs maintained by women have records which are touching in what they reveal of toilsome struggling toward intellectual improvement. One of them is an organisation of farmers' wives, and its meetings are held at the different farms of the members. It is often very difficult to attend, the women having sometimes to walk over three miles to the meetings. And Indiana roads in the winter—the leisure time of the farmer's wife—are not the most comfortable promenades in the world."

reason why a woman should not be made President of the United States"! When we recall the low and degraded position of women in the pagan world and in the middle ages, we cannot help perceiving that their advancement and elevation socially are as great today as that attained by men politically. And yet there is much to be done, even in our own country, in improving the condition of women, especially in the factories of the Southern and Eastern States. God speed all noble efforts for the improvement and well-being of women! For on them depend the well-being and moral advancement of the nation. The poet doubtless speaks truly when he says that "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," and assuredly the head that teaches our school-children determines the future of the nation.

CHAPTER IV

CONVERSATION AMONG DIFFERENT RACES

"Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay." —*Tennyson.*

I MUST repeat—that I would not discourage study, or belittle the value of reading and the knowledge derived from books. Far from it; for these are the things that give food for conversation, and are among the best and surest means for developing the mind and gaining knowledge; but I would set a higher value upon conversation than has generally been given to it. I would not care to learn anything if I could not repeat or teach it. All men know and value the benefits of reading; few know and appreciate the value or the benefits of conversation. For the book, compared with the speaker, is a dead thing—merely the picture of a landscape compared with the landscape itself; and yet, strange to say, many persons prefer the picture to the reality!

There is, indeed, no question as to the fact that the most fertile source of ideas, outside of actual experience, is the rich field of literature, and nothing can so enrich conversation as a large acquaintance with good literature. These two complete or complement

each other; or, as the Eastern sage has so well expressed it: "Reading is a rich source of knowledge; observation is still better; but conversation is the best of all."

In Germany I was much pleased to find merchants and manufacturers, as well as students and teachers, taking a recess of two hours at noon, and after dinner leisurely chatting over their coffee and cigars about the affairs of the day, often about scientific, literary, and artistic matters, and thus promoting their health and longevity as well as their intellectual and spiritual well-being. Although they like to make money, as other people do, they do not sacrifice everything to this object; they try to enjoy life in all its fulness; give wide scope to the exercise of all their faculties; and prize social enjoyment, culture, and good manners, even above money-making; and indeed they certainly live in a larger and more pleasant world than most mere money-makers do. While the Germans read books—for more books are published in Germany than in any other country—our people seem to live almost entirely on the "weeds of literature"—mere periodical scraps. We publish more of these things—periodicals—than any other nation, and hence the superficial knowledge and poor thinking for which the mass is credited.

The Germans claim, indeed, the possession and enjoyment of a quality little known among Americans, "Gemüthlichkeit," for which there is hardly an equiva-

lent in the English language. Perhaps "familiar, easy, artless soul communion in conversation" comes nearest to it. But most people in America express the idea by "having a good time," which may be anything but "a feast of reason and flow of soul."

The French are even fonder of conversation than the Germans, and in some circles it has become a fine art (not "a lost art") among them. In the Parisian salons the *beaux esprits* of the day come together for the luxury of talk, and some of them have become famous for their charm and power in this art. Indeed, the French cannot live without conversation; for where society cannot be had, they pine and die. This is why the French people have never made any figure in the world as colonists; they cannot live in isolation; they need society as much as plants need sunshine. So that when a Frenchman leaves his native land, he always does so with the hope of returning some day to *la belle France*, where he can enjoy to the full the luxury of society and conversation. Volney tells us that the emigrés who came to America during the French Revolution—people who settled in Louisiana and cultivated the soil for a living—used to leave their occupation from time to time and walk or ride to the town to talk; and this town—New Orleans—was several hundred miles away! "Among all classes in France," says Madame de Staël, "the need of conversation is strongly felt; for speech is not simply here, as elsewhere, a means of communi-

cating ideas, sentiments, and business affairs; but an instrument on which the people love to play, which revives and animates their spirits, like music or strong liquors among other races, and which is necessary to their very existence."

Sainte Beuve thus describes the conversation of the guests at Madame de Staël's country mansion at Coppet:

The literary and philosophical conversations, always high-toned, clever and witty, began as early as eleven in the morning, when all met at breakfast; and were carried on again at dinner, and in the interval between dinner and supper, which was at eleven at night, and often as late as midnight. It was here at Coppet that Benjamin Constant showed to the greatest advantage, proving himself to be, as Madame de Staël has proclaimed him, *le premier esprit du monde*, the greatest wit of the day. He was certainly the greatest of distinguished men. Witnesses tell us that the sparkling brilliancy of their conversation in this chosen circle could not be surpassed; like a magic game of racket and ball, conversation was thrown from one to the other for hours without a single miss.

On the other hand, the English, who are the greatest of colonisers, thrive in a wilderness, without a soul to speak to, except their own family. So that, although there are, of course, many fine talkers among them, the English as a people are not distinguished for their conversational powers. Being more self-contained than the French, they can live in communion with

nature and their own thoughts, or with the thoughts of one or two of their great authors. Give an Englishman Shakespeare and the Bible, with liberty to think and speak as he pleases, and he cares nothing for the rest of the world. He can get along without society of any kind, and can live in a wilderness. If he has a family, that is enough for him. Sometimes, indeed, when other settlers come along, he begins to feel "crowded," and moves farther into the wilderness.

Many of the English are so shy and reserved they cannot, like the French, flow out in talk. In fact, they are noted for shyness and taciturnity. So that while the Englishman is satisfied with his own family, the feeling of the Frenchman may be well illustrated by the story of the Parisian who, being very fond of the conversation of a married lady, visited her almost every evening; but when her husband died, and it was suggested to him that he had now a chance to marry her, he exclaimed:

"Yes, yes; but where then should I spend my evenings?"

Probably nothing can illustrate the English shyness better than this story of Tennyson: "At a hospitable mansion Tennyson suddenly remarked to a lady who had been introduced to him earlier in the evening, 'I could not find anything to say to you before dinner, but now that I have had a bottle of port wine, I can talk as much as you please.'" He was not drunk—he had only ceased to be shy!

It is the same with the Scotch. "They need a little operating upon," says Sydney Smith, "to get their humour out"; and he added, "And I know no better instrument for this purpose than the corkscrew!" Yes, the English are shy and reserved, while the Scotch are slow and thoughtful; but the Irishman can always talk. The Scotchman's wit is said to come afterwards; yet the Scotch and the English have both wit and humour, and some writers go so far as to call the English the wittiest people in Europe. Some Americans, like Thoreau, can enjoy solitude as much as the English; but these are rare. The majority of Americans crave social life as much as the French do. And yet I think there is this difference between the two: that while there is a strong tendency among the French, as also among Americans, toward city life, where conversation may be enjoyed in all its fulness, the Americans seek the city more for the sake of its amusements, and to enjoy an easier life, than for the sake of conversation. The French are equally fond of the amusements; but they are still fonder of conversation, which is the very breath of their nostrils.

How often we hear of some prosperous American citizen who, charmed with a beautiful spot in the country, buys it, builds a beautiful home on it, and settles thereon; but then, after a while, he gets tired of it, sells it at a sacrifice, and returns to the city which he had left so willingly! What was the cause of his dissatisfaction? The house, the country, all

were beautiful; but he never counted on the loss of society; he never thought of the separation from friends and acquaintances; and he found solitary life insupportable. The higher the culture, the more people draw together; the more they think, the more they crave expression for their thoughts.

Well, then, is this love of conversation and of association in communities a virtuous or a vicious tendency? It is certainly, under proper restrictions, a virtuous tendency; for it conduces to the enlarging of men's sympathies and the broadening of their views, to the increase of their knowledge of life and human nature, and the improvement of their own moral and intellectual powers. The gregarious tendency of mankind is as old as the race. It is not the societies and clubs that foster vice in the cities, but the Poverty Flats and the Mulberry Bends, where the want of light and sunshine, of space and air, of healthful homes and pleasant surroundings, breeds all that is evil. Bring light, room, and sunshine into these places, and the vermin will crawl out and disappear.

Seclusion leads to selfishness and savagery; conversation and social intercourse to benevolence, toleration, and enlightenment. People in clubs and societies are constantly combining and contributing to some good cause, often a cause for which individuals can do little or nothing. To exchange views on the questions of the day; to express thought in familiar,

every-day speech; to hear about the "other half" as well as our own; to hear about those whom we have once known and what they are doing—this is an innate craving of human nature, and leads to higher sympathies, more liberal views, greater interest in our fellow-beings, and a broader intellectual life than the hermit can possibly know. A love of nature is noble and highly to be commended; but it is a remarkable fact that those who talk and write much about Nature, who paint pictures of her and write poems about her, generally live in cities; while those who live with her all the time are generally hankering after the town. Though the poets and painters may love and adore Nature very much, and visit her occasionally, they are somewhat like the Frenchman who loved to call often on the married lady—they like to converse with her from time to time, but they do not care to be married to her!

CHAPTER V

CONVERSATION AS A GERMINATOR AND VEHICLE OF IDEAS

> "In conversation sparks are often emitted which, falling on kindling minds, create a blaze which astonishes the world."—*Anon.*

Most people, excepting, perhaps, novel-readers, read for knowledge only; but they do not converse for knowledge; that comes of itself. In conversation, knowledge is rarely dug up or worked out, but simply given and taken freely, on both sides. For, unlike the exertion in reading, there is reciprocity in it, a reciprocal exchange of ideas; whereas in reading there may be nothing but one-sidedness, "all crow and no turkey." Let me say, however, in passing, that it is good to read stories, even for the sake of amusement or diversion; for such reading affords, like conversation, rest and refreshment to the mind. There's where the novel comes in pleasantly, and often profitably; it amuses and entertains like pleasant conversation; and the best part of the novel is often the conversations in it.

And here is another consideration. Many an author, through the conversation of the characters of his story, gives expression to thoughts and views which

he would not dare to express under his own name. He makes conversation the vehicle for his daring or aggressive thoughts, the means of unburdening his mind of conceptions, hopes, and fears which he could hardly avow in any other way. Lord Beaconsfield did this in "Lothair" and other works of his. This is what gives such zest to fiction—the characters, which may be real persons, are unfettered in any way—they express their whole minds, and give utterance to all their thoughts and opinions, fears and aspirations. And one of these characters, generally the chief, is the author himself. Is not Wilhelm Meister Goethe himself? Is not the "Antiquary," Scott? "David Copperfield," Dickens? "Childe Harold," Byron? and so on. We know now that Micawber was Dickens's father, and Mrs. Micawber his mother, and that Sir Anthony Absolute in "The Rivals" was a portrait of Sheridan's father, and Captain Absolute of the author himself. And is it not exceedingly probable that the Prince in "Henry IV" was Shakespeare in his youth, and Hamlet the poet himself in mature years? There's the point—through fiction, the conversation in fiction, men say what they think, and we get at their heart and soul and see what they really are.

Nothing clarifies our ideas on any subject like subjecting them to the white heat of free discussion; nothing gives us so clear a knowledge of our own powers as measuring them with those of others. And sometimes we find that in endeavouring to receive light

we do so by the action of our own minds, and shed more light than we receive. Many a man has acquired clearer intellectual light on his own talents, gained more confidence in himself, by mixing among men and comparing himself with others, than in any other way.

True conversation is always reciprocally beneficial. No matter how much you give, you are sure to receive something; no matter how much you receive, you are sure to give something. The more you give, the more you have to give. Expression of thought makes it grow. As soon as you express one thought, a hundred others may start from it; the avenues of the mind open at once to new views, to new perceptions of things; fresh beams of light flash in on all sides, each beam enabling you to see things you never saw before; so that, by a compensatory law in intellectual as in moral life, the giver is more blessed than the receiver. And far from impoverishing him, the more he distributes his wealth, the wealthier he becomes; for he may say with Juliet:

> "The more I give to thee,
> The more I have."

A new thought may to the thinker be simply a new thought and nothing more—a dead germ waiting for the contact of another thought to be warmed into life. By dropping it into the mind of another, it suddenly germinates and springs into life; it expands and grows into a new creation. As in all nature, even in

the very brambles and bushes of the field, there is an affinity of sex, whose association and contact are necessary to the bringing forth of flower and fruit; so in the world of thought it appears as if, by a species of affinity, one thought links itself to another, and causes many others to spring from it. Thus on the wings of conversation the seeds and germs of new productions are constantly scattered, and the thoughts of one mind cause new thoughts to spring into being from contact with those of another. Every fresh utterance, like Shelley's "West Wind,"

> Drives the dead thoughts over the universe,
> Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth.

How often we hear of a new invention, a new poem, a new picture or romance springing from a single pregnant utterance in conversation! Professor Drummond tells us that it was the simple talk of a friend to some plain folk in a Highland deer forest which suggested to him his book on the "Cardinal Principles of Christian Experience"; and the author of the "Breadwinners" declared that his work sprang from the remark of a stranger uttered in the street. How many interesting subjects Lady Austen's conversation suggested to the poet Cowper! Her talk, like that of many another bright woman, was a fountain of inspiration to a poet, and but for her we should never have known "John Gilpin" or "The Task."

Indeed, the most enjoyable conversations are those

between two persons, especially between two who have much in common, or at least some points of sympathy with each other. In such conversations there is more confidence than in a numerous and mixed company. Addison used to say, "There is no such thing as conversation except between two persons;" and Walter Savage Landor, who abhorred nothing more than a mixed or large company, declared that "to dine in company with more than two was a Gaulish and German thing, clownish and odious in the extreme." Emerson says: "I find this law of one to one peremptory for conversation, which is the practice and consummation of friendship. You shall have very useful and sheering discourse at several times with two several men; but let all three of you come together, and you shall not have one new and hearty word."

This is because we seldom find two persons together with each of whom we are equally intimate, and cannot, therefore, speak with equal freedom to both. Is it not a common experience to find a man telling you things he would never tell to two or more persons? One is apt to speak in a large company more for effect than for edification; more formally than frankly. I have known men who were admirable talkers, full of excellent thoughts, with one or two intimate friends; but in a large company they would oppose every reasonable proposition, and weary every one but themselves with their cranky and absurd notions.

I was lately in the company of half a dozen literary men and lawyers, where the conversation turned on trifles, fell into quips and quiddities, and finally became so flighty, fidgety, mocking, and crotchety, that it was simply torture to listen to them. With all together I had no conversation at all—they simply annihilated one another; and yet I knew that with any one of these men I might have had a very pleasant talk. The old saying, "Two is very good company; three none at all," is often literally true.

With an intimate friend you can ask questions and state difficulties which you would not touch when several are present. This is how we get rid of unsound views, or become confirmed in sound ones. Sometimes we no sooner state a proposition than we perceive its untenableness. Mr. Bailey tells us that having adopted an opinion favourable to Berkeley's theory of vision, he never questioned it until he attempted to explain it in conversation, when he perceived that the grounds on which it rested were not so conclusive as he had fancied; and further investigation convinced him of its erroneousness. Thus, while some theories will hardly bear a full statement in conversation, others become clearer and more convincing the oftener they are stated.

Thought produces thought, and he who sits down to write a letter sometimes finds himself expanding into an essay or a history. Burke's famous "Reflections on the French Revolution" originated in a letter to a

young friend. He had no sooner begun to state his views to his friend than the subject began to expand on all sides, showing its far-reaching influence and effects. His young friend had touched a spring that unlocked a whole mine of golden ore.

It was Goethe's talk, after his return from Switzerland, that inspired Schiller to write "Wilhelm Tell." The well-known novel "Adam Bede" arose from a tragic story told to George Eliot in her youth by an aunt of hers. "The incident," she said, "lay on my mind for years, like a dead germ apparently, till time had made a nidus in which it could fructify." Did not many of Sir Walter Scott's stories spring up in the same way?

Coleridge's most famous poem, the "Ancient Mariner," was suggested by a remark of Wordsworth's in conversation. The two men had been talking of writing a poem in which a supernatural event might be related in such a way as to give it a resemblance of truth; whereupon Coleridge related the dream of a friend in which a skeleton ship was navigated by dead men; then Wordsworth said he had been reading of a ship in the South Seas which, after one of the crew had shot an albatross, was tossed about in storms or spellbound in calms, the killing of the sea-bird being supposed to arouse the ire of the tutelary spirits of that region.

Thus the "Ancient Mariner" arose from the single remark of a friend in conversation. "The gloss with

which it was subsequently accompanied," says Wordsworth, "was not thought of by either of us at the time; at least not a hint of it was given to me; so I have no doubt it was a felicitous afterthought." Of course; the suggestion was all that the poet needed to build upon; for when his fertile mind had got to work, the rest followed easily.

And curiously enough, it was in a similar way that an American poet received the first suggestion for his greatest and most popular work. "Hawthorne dined one day with Longfellow," says Mr. James T. Fields, "and brought a friend with him from Salem. After dinner, the friend said, 'I have been trying to persuade Hawthorne to write a story based on a legend of Acadia, and still current there—the legend of a girl who, in the dispersion of the Acadians, was separated from her lover, passed her life in waiting and seeking for him, and only found him at last dying in a hospital when both were old.' Longfellow wondered that the legend did not strike the fancy of Hawthorne, and he said to him, 'If you have really made up your mind not to use it for a story, will you let me have it for a poem?' To this Hawthorne readily consented, and promised moreover not to treat the subject in prose till Longfellow had seen what he could do with it in verse." Such is the origin of "Evangeline."

Doubtless there are many other similar instances. Nothing sets the imagination on fire like a touching or a striking story told in conversation. What a

flaming fire would have been kindled in the mind of Sir Bulwer Lytton had he been informed of the discoveries of Maspero and Schliemann in Greece, or of Rawlinson in Egypt! Well, some coming poet or romance writer will doubtless make something of them yet. The novelist often pictures historical events more vividly and truly than the historian. Bulwer Lytton's description of the eruption of Vesuvius in the year 79 (in "The Last Days of Pompeii") has been strongly confirmed by the experiences in the late eruption of that volcano.

CHAPTER VI

WHENCE COMES THE INSPIRATION OF LITERARY WORKERS?

"Books are specimens of the conversations of an age."
—*Huxley.*

"The best orator is he who turns ears into eyes."
—*Eastern Proverb.*

"THE reason that so few good books are written," says Walter Bagehot in his essay entitled "Shakespeare, the Man," "is that so few people that can write know anything. In general, an author has always lived in a room, has read books, has cultivated science, is acquainted with the style and sentiments of the best authors; but he is out of the way of employing his own eyes and ears. He has nothing to hear and nothing to see. His life is a vacuum."

Who are the two most popular, most widely read, most interesting English authors of modern times? Who are the two whose books still live on and are constantly read, studied, and translated all over the world? Shakespeare and Scott, the dramatist and the novelist, the two men that lived most among the people and reflected best the life and character of the people. New and improved editions of the works of these authors are printed and published every year, and

the printing and binding and selling of their works alone gives steady employment, even at the present day, to an army of men and women.

Whence did these writers acquire such fascinating power as to attract and hold, generation after generation, all classes of people, in all countries and tongues? You will say they were men of genius—so they were; but this is not all. There are many men of genius, dramatists, poets, and novelists, who never acquire such power, and probably never will or could. These men were, in their habits and manner of living, different from other men of genius; and this fact explains, in large measure, the secret of their power. Just listen to what that shrewd and penetrating critic, Walter Bagehot, says of the character and habits of Sir Walter Scott, who has been called "the Scottish Shakespeare":

In his lifetime people denied that Scott was a poet, but nobody said that he was not "the best fellow" in Scotland—perhaps that was not much—or that he had not more wise joviality, more living talk, more graphic humour, than any man in Great Britain. "Wherever we went," said Mr. Wordsworth, "we found his name acted as an *open sesame*, and I believe that in the character of the *sheriff's* friends, we might have counted on a hearty welcome under any roof in the border country." "Never neglect to talk to people with whom you are casually thrown," was his precept, and he exemplified the maxim himself. "I believe," observes his biographer, "that Scott has somewhere expressed in print his satisfaction, that amid all the

changes of our manners, the ancient freedom of personal intercourse may still be indulged between a master and an *out-of-door* servant; but in truth he kept by the old fashion, even with domestic servants, to an extent which I have hardly ever seen practised by any other gentleman. He conversed with his coachman if he sat by him, as he often did, on the box—with his footman, if he chanced to be in the rumble." Indeed, he did not confine his humanity to his own people; any steady-going servant of a friend of his was soon considered as a sort of friend too, and was sure to have a kind little colloquy to himself at coming or going. "Sir Walter speaks to every man as if he was his blood relation," was the expressive comment of one of these dependants. It was in this way that he acquired the great knowledge of various kinds of men, which is so clear and conspicuous in his writings; nor could that knowledge have been acquired on easier terms or in any other way. No man could describe the character of Dandie Dinmont without having been in Liddesdale.

Now listen to what the same critic says of the habits of Shakespeare:

Now it appears that Shakespeare not only had that various commerce with, and experience of men, which was common both to Goethe and to Scott, but also that he agrees with the latter rather than with the former in the kind and species of that experience. He was not merely with men, but of men; he was not a "thing apart," with a clear intuition of what was in those around him; he had in his own nature the germs and tendencies of the very elements that he described. He knew what was in man, for he felt it in himself.

Throughout all his writings you see an amazing sympathy with common people, rather an excessive tendency to dwell on the common features of ordinary lives. You feel that common people could have been cut out of him, but not without his feeling it; for it would have deprived him of a very favourite subject—of a portion of his ideas to which he habitually recurred.

Shakespeare was too wise not to know that for most of the purposes of human life stupidity is a most valuable element. He had nothing of the impatience which sharp logical narrow minds habitually feel when they come across those who do not apprehend their quick and precise deductions. No doubt he talked to the stupid players, to the stupid door-keeper, to the property man, who considers paste jewels "very preferable, besides the expense"—talked with the stupid apprentices of stupid Fleet Street, and had much pleasure in ascertaining what was their notion of "King Lear." In his comprehensive mind it was enough if every man hitched well into his own place in human life.

Is it not plain that the secret of the power of these great writers lies in the fact that they wrote about men and women they had known and seen themselves, and not merely about men and things they had read of or studied? Is it not evident that the world was their book, and that they loved to mingle with and converse with the world? Addison declared that there is probably no great difference between the thoughts of the learned and those of the unlearned, only the former have the power of putting them into literary shape. And Sir Walter Scott said himself that he

had found more wisdom among the common people than he had found anywhere else outside of the pages of the Bible.

In fact, now that I think of it, there are other famous and successful authors who were equally indebted to their intimate and constant conversation with the people. Will any one affirm that Charles Dickens, for example, owed his knowledge to books, or that he was a student of books? Will any one who knows his life deny that his education and knowledge were derived almost entirely from his intercourse with the London poor? Is he not noted as the most successful literary painter of the manners, characters, life, and language of the English working people? Did he not study and paint to the life even the criminal classes, the odd and peculiar classes, as well as the butcher and baker and candlestick-maker of his day? He never entered college, hardly a school of any kind; and yet what college-bred man has equalled him? Even the schools and school-masters were never so successfully, so strikingly described, as he has described them in "Nicholas Nickleby."

Goethe says that in fiction no character can be successfully painted that is not drawn from life. Dickens had known and conversed with nearly all the characters he drew. This is how he came to give such a life-like picture of the common people, their ways and works, their languages and conversation, their hopes and fears. He was a man of genius, it is true; but

his genius would probably never have amounted to much without this education. A college education would be nothing compared with the one he had received. He was brought up among the poor, the distressed, hard-working people of London; he knew them well, and painted them as he knew them. He observed and studied all classes, even the criminal classes, as I have no doubt Shakespeare did, and his pictures of their life and language are so true, so touching, so distressing, that the world has been fascinated by them ever since they were drawn. So that probably no other writers in all literature can, in this respect, be compared with these three—Shakespeare, Scott, and Dickens.

CHAPTER VII

SOMETHING MORE ABOUT THE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

"Many are poets who have never penned
Their inspiration, and perhaps the best."
—*Lord Byron.*

We know that some great orators could not write, though they could speak on any subject; and this is sometimes the case with fine conversers. Though possessing a remarkable faculty for expressing their thoughts easily and eloquently in speech or in conversation, these unliterary geniuses seemed to be "cribbed, cabined, and confined" the moment they took pen in hand and attempted to express their thoughts on paper. Such a man was Bronson Alcott. He was such an eloquent, fascinating talker that, as one of his friends expressed it, "to listen to him was like going to Heaven in a swing!" Emerson thought so highly of him, and listened to him with such deep respect, that he set him down as possessing "one of the best heads in America," and declared he had "for twelve years served him so well, he was the one reasonable creature to speak to that he wanted." "When at his best," continues Mr. Emerson, "Mr. Alcott said more good things than any other man I have ever known."

In fact, Alcott was a born talker or converser; a man whose genius rose and shone in conversation like a beacon light on a dark sea. It was in conversation that his best thoughts pressed for utterance, and he thus scattered pearls of wisdom among all who cared to listen; and yet the moment he attempted to write, his inspiration seemed to leave him. Pen, ink, and paper seemed to have a freezing influence on his brain. He was a modern Socrates, who only lacked a reporting Plato to immortalise him. Among his friends were Emerson, Thoreau, the Channings, Bancroft, Margaret Fuller, Hawthorne, Theodore Parker, James Russell Lowell, and a hundred other writers, all of whom thought highly of him.

To those who love knowledge, culture, philosophy, the conversation of such a man is doubtless of inestimable value. Alcott was a great teacher, who inspired many of the best minds of his day into eloquent written expression. Who can tell how many fertile brain-seeds he scattered, how many authors he formed, how many fine intellectual minds he inspired?

I suppose the orators who could not write needed, as Bronson Alcott did, the inspiration of an audience, for the full exhibition of their powers. Charles James Fox and John Philpot Curran may be mentioned as examples. Curran vainly attempted to write an autobiography, and Fox tried in vain to write a history of James II. The work was so painful and exasperating to them they could not get on with it.

Sir James Mackintosh has been reproached for not having produced any great or considerable work; but by his rich and fertile conversation with his friends he has indirectly had more influence perhaps on the world's thought than many writers. Robert Hall, the famous Baptist preacher, declared that in conversation with Mackintosh he had learned more of philosophy than he did from all the books he had ever read; and Francis Horner said that Mackintosh had, by his conversation, "enlarged his prospects into the wide region of moral speculation more than any other tutor he had ever had." Is it not probable that his talk suggested many books?

"When a man publishes a book," says Cowper, "he will never know what effect it has had until the day of judgment." Similarly, it may be said that when any man utters one fertile thought in conversation he will never know its full effect until that day.

Oliver Goldsmith's father was a poor curate in an obscure corner of Ireland; his sermons and talks were addressed to a few plain people; and it might be supposed that his influence extended but a little way. But it was not so; his influence extended farther, and was perhaps more potent than that of any other man of his day. For his son, Oliver, who was formed by his talks and sermons, set them forth in the "Vicar of Wakefield," in the "The Deserted Village," and in other famous works which have proved a source of edification, of profit, and of pleasure to several gen-

erations of the reading public since his day, and will undoubtedly continue to do the same for many generations to come.

The poet Coleridge, speaking of his own life and conversation, says: "Would that the criterion of a scholar's utility were the number and moral value of the truths which he has been the means of throwing into general circulation; or the number and value of the minds which, by his conversation and letters, he has excited into activity and supplied with the germs of their after-growth!" Well might "the old man eloquent" thus speak; for he had, in his day, probably exerted a greater influence in this way than any other man of his time.

I have sometimes thought it a pity that a man like Coleridge, who constantly poured out his accumulated stores of knowledge and thought in conversation to eager and willing listeners, should have no chance of any sort of compensation for his efforts, every one taking his ideas for nothing, as a matter of course. Some acknowledgment should have been made to him in some form.

Mr. Stopford Brooke, in his life of the eloquent preacher Frederick M. Robertson, says:

Mr. Robertson easily received impressions, and some of his highest and best thoughts were kindled by sparks which fell from the minds of his friends. His intercourse, even with those who were inferior to himself, was always fruitful. He took their ideas, which they

did not recognise as such, and, as first discoverer, used them as his own; but they were always made more practical and more forcible by the use he made of them. Even of thoughts which he received from those to whom they belonged by right of conscious possession he made himself the master. One from whom he borrowed says of him, "It was not that he appropriated what belonged to others, but that he made it his own by the same tenure as property is first held—by the worth he gave it." To such a man society was a necessity. He needed its impulse, its clash of opinions, and, in some degree, its excitement; and he always spoke best, wrote best, and acted best when he was kindled into combativeness or admiration by the events which stir the heart of humanity.

That great tribune of the people in the French Revolution, Mirabeau, was another good example of this sort of genius. He fused the thoughts of others into his own; made them a part of his thinking, his being, himself; and when he spoke, he gave them such noble and eloquent expression that all men were moved and charmed by them.

"To make other men's thoughts really your own," says Carlyle, "and not simply to reproduce them, is an evidence of genius."

When an enemy of Voltaire said that he (Voltaire) was "the very first man in the world at writing down what other people thought," John Morley observed that "this assertion, which was meant for a spiteful censure, was in fact a truly honourable distinction."

Perhaps the most remarkable example on record of

the influence of conversation—an influence which had the most tremendous consequences—is that which Diderot's conversation exerted on Jean Jacques Rousseau. Diderot was more remarkable for his conversation than for his writings. He shone as a converser; was full of ideas and new projects; and he charmed everybody he met by his talk. But this was not all—he was a suggestive talker. He had more thoughts than he could write, and he threw these out for others to make use of. "He who knows Diderot only in his writings," says Marmontel, "does not know him at all. When he grew animated in talk, and allowed his thoughts to flow in all their abundance, then he bebecame truly fascinating." I have no doubt that even more so than Burke, he grew into new thoughts as he spoke, and stirred the minds of his hearers into new views.

Now, these two, Diderot and Rousseau, were closely associated in literary work for a considerable time; and one may imagine the effect of Diderot's talk on so impressionable a mind as that of Rousseau. When the Academy of Dijon, in 1749, offered a prize for an essay on the question, "Whether the progress of the arts and sciences had tended to the purification of morals and manners," Diderot advised Rousseau to compete for it by an essay on the negative side of the question, pointing out to him the greater fame such an essay would procure than one on the affirmative. Rousseau acted on the suggestion at once. He began

to study, to think, and to write, on a subject which he found congenial and interesting; it grew and expanded as he went on; and when his essay was finished and published it made him at once famous.

Rousseau had found his vocation; he knew now what to do; his career was marked out for him; he had got into the line of thought that suited him; for nearly everything he subsequently wrote is more or less a protest against existing things, or the civilisation of the time. Then followed his "Essay on the Inequalities among Men"; after that his famous tract on the "Social Contract"; then his equally famous "Nouvelle Héloise," which is in the same vein; and finally, to crown all, his "Emile," which is simply an essay illustrating the same arguments in the form of a narrative, which became the rage of the time.

"Emile," it is well known, was one of the chief factors in producing the French Revolution, and consequently, in effecting the thousand changes and modifications in the laws of France, and indeed in those of all Europe, which subsequently followed.

Such was the influence of the conversation of Diderot on the mind of this man; such were the effects of a single suggestion dropped into the fertile brain of an apt and willing listener. Rousseau seized the ideas which his friend willingly offered him, clothed them in the magic hues of his own fascinating style, and set all France, all Europe, ablaze with his theories and his arguments.

Men of genius by their conversation are often helpful to one another in this way. They act and react on each other beneficially. Among such intellectual workers, there probably never existed two men who were more reciprocally beneficial to each other than Schiller and Goethe. These men came, after a time, to love and trust each other, and the talk of the one was just what the other needed to stimulate him to exertion. Goethe, naturally distant and proud, held Schiller aloof at first; so that during the first five years of their near neighbourhood, they saw each other seldom. Schiller, reserved and naturally sensitive, would not, though he venerated Goethe, make any advances of his own accord; so they remained almost strangers to each other until accident brought them together. Then, gradually, and almost imperceptibly, each found the conversation of the other almost necessary to his existence. Goethe's talk inspired Schiller to higher and higher ideals and nobler work; and Schiller's enthusiasm brought Goethe out of his seclusion, revived his interest in passing events, and compelled him to think of, and take an interest in, the things of the day. Schiller's open, generous and kindly nature was a solace to Goethe; Goethe's full mind and large experience was a fountain of inspiration to Schiller. Each found in the conversation of the other suggestions which he turned to account in his own way. Schiller wrote his best works during the last ten years of his life, when he was in almost

daily communication with Goethe; and Goethe's most popular pieces, like "Hermann and Dorothea" and "Wilhelm Meister," were composed during the years in which he was most intimate with Schiller.

Schiller inspired Goethe with new enthusiasm for living art and natural creations; Goethe inspired Schiller with a desire to produce works of a nobler and higher order than he had hitherto attempted; and when Schiller died, Goethe retired into his old reserve and seclusion again, feeling he had lost the one man beloved, the most valuable and best-loved friend he had ever had, whose place could never be filled by another, and whose influence none other could produce. Goethe, though he was well aware he possessed higher and stronger powers than Schiller, loved the man for his kindly nature and lofty aims; and Schiller, though he knew he was inferior to Goethe, revered him for his intellectual power and his generous nature. Such was the influence of these two men, the one on the other; such was this perfect union of friends. This mutual esteem and kindly exchange of friendly offices is indeed one of the most pleasing pictures in the history of literature. Would that all literary men could live together in such harmony and such mutually beneficial relations!

Any one who reads Trelawney's "Recollections of Lord Byron" may plainly see that Shelley's conversation had a powerful influence on Byron. In Italy these two men saw and conversed with each other al-

most daily for a year and a half. Shelley was sober and philosophic in thought; Byron was flighty and erratic; Shelley was earnest and striving after higher and nobler things; Byron was sordid and selfish in most of his ways; and while Shelley wrote to further noble ends, Byron wrote for fame and money. Short as their acquaintance was, however, Shelley's conversation influenced Byron's thinking to a considerable extent; and had he lived, he would probably have changed Byron's character and aims altogether.

Thomas DeQuincey draws this striking parallel between the conversation of Edmund Burke and Samuel Johnson. "While Burke constantly advanced to new truths," says he, "of which he himself never thought when he began to talk, Johnson never talked but to establish some question touching which he had made up his mind from the beginning. The doctor never in any instance grows a truth before our eyes while in the act of delivering it or moving towards it. All that he offered up, to the end of the chapter, he had when he began. But with Burke, such was the prodigious elasticity of his thinking, equally in his conversation and in his writings, the mere act of movement became the principle or cause of progress. Motion propagated motion, and life threw off life. The very violence of a projectile, as thrown by him, caused it to rebound in fresh forms, fresh angles, spluttering, coruscating, which gave out thoughts as new (and which at the beginning would

have been as startling) to himself as to his hearer."

It was this very fertility and wide discursiveness of thought on the part of Burke, however, which proved fatal to him as a parliamentary orator. He talked over the heads of his audience; he touched on so many collateral and distantly related points, that his hearers could not follow him, and finally lost sight of the object of his speech altogether; and so, wearied and discouraged by his wide-spreading flight, they left him while he

> Went on refining,
> And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining.

Burke's conversation was indeed so rich and varied that, like the Nile, it enriched all on whom it flowed. I have already cited what Fox said of his conversation; and I have no doubt many others owed as much to him as Fox did. Dr. Johnson considered him by far the ablest of all the talkers whom he had encountered. "If that fellow Burke were here now," said he on one occasion, when he was indisposed, "he would kill me." He felt that he needed all his powers to meet Burke, and that this exertion would exhaust him at that time. This was in Burke's soundest and strongest period of life, when he favoured liberty and progress on the broadest lines. Had the doctor lived to read his "French Revolution," he would have hugged him. The French Revolution largely

changed Burke's way of thinking; while Fox stuck to his democratic ideas and his confidence in the people through the whole terrible turmoil.

I shall conclude this chapter with one more example of the invaluable aid that an author may obtain from conversation. There is perhaps hardly a literary work in existence that has exerted such a deep, widespread, beneficial and lasting influence on its readers as "Plutarch's Lives"—a work that has not only been a fountain of inspiration and a quarry of literary material to hundreds of students and authors, but the means of forming the character and regulating the conduct of many men of action and heroic character. Now whence came the inspiration and even the material for this immortal work? Mr. Langhorne, the translator of "Plutarch's Lives," declares that there is good reason to believe that Plutarch derived most of his material from the conversation of the Romans of his day; "for," says Mr. Langhorne, with fine irony, "the discourse of people of education and distinction in those days was somewhat different from ours. It was not on the powers and pedigree of a horse—it was not on a match of travelling between geese and turkeys—it was not a race of maggots started against each other on the table, when they first came to light from the shell of a filbert—it was not by what part of a spaniel you may suspend him the longest without making him whine—it was not on the exquisite finesse and the highest manœuvres of men.

The old Romans had no ambition for attainments of this nature. They had no such masters in science as Heber and Hoyle (the Sullivan and Fitzsimmons of the day). The taste of their day did not run so high. The powers of poetry and philosophy—the economy of human life and manners—the cultivation of the intellectual faculties—the enlargement of the mind—historical and political discussions on the events of their country: these and such subjects as these made the principal part of their conversation. Of this, Plutarch has given us at once a proof and a specimen in what he calls his 'Symposiacs;' or, as Selden calls it, his Table-Talk. From such conversations as these, then, we cannot wonder that he was able to collect such treasures as were necessary for the maintenance of his biographical undertaking."

So much for conversation as the source of knowledge and inspiration to literary workers. Many other examples might easily be cited; but these will suffice to illustrate this important truth, that there is no inspiration for a literary man like that found in conversation.

CHAPTER VIII

CONVERSATION VS. ARGUMENT AND DEBATE

"Many can argue; not many can converse."—*Bronson Alcott.*

"Preserve me from the thing I dread and hate:
A duel in the form of a debate."

—*Cowper.*

I WISH to say something to young people about argument, especially to those young men who, being very fond of disputation, confound argument with conversation, and slay people right and left by their assertions. Those, therefore, who have outlived this crude age may well skip this chapter.

Swift says that "argument, as generally managed, is the worst sort of conversation, as in books it is the worst sort of reading." The Dean had doubtless seen a good deal of this sort of thing in his controversial day, and it is not unknown in ours. We have enough of it, especially at election times, when the newspapers and the talk of the day are full, not only of argument, but of vituperation. Argument in conversation generally brings out the worst manners and the most violent passions, and seldom does any good to either arguers or listeners. Facts decide elections, not argument (that is, where intrigue does not overcome

both), and facts may be stated in the coolest way. But you will say, facts form part of the argument. So they do; but a plain statement of facts, being the strongest argument, needs no comment; the conclusion is inevitable.

With arguers generally, enlightenment is out of the question; victory is the only thing thought of or aimed at. To show that he is right and his opponent wrong—this is the whole aim of the arguer. With the discovery of truth or the enlightenment of his opponent he has no concern. And when a man argues very much and very often, he will finally accept a false conclusion rather than suffer a defeat; and if his interest be on the side of his argument, he will shut his ears to everything that tells against it. The arguer takes a strong grip of one side of a question, without caring much what may be said on the other; and sometimes, from constant repetition, he will argue himself into believing to be true that which he knows to be false.

> For their own dreams at length deceive 'em,
> And, oft repeating, they believe 'em.

Arguing may help to sharpen one's wits and increase one's power of supporting or defending a proposition; but this, though it may be indulged in as an exercise in polemics, especially by young lawyers and politicians, is not conversation. True conversation aims at a free, unprejudiced expression of thought,

or an exchange of opinions on any given subject, and not at making converts or gaining a point. Young and half educated people argue; older and more experienced people converse. The higher the culture, the less argument, and vice versa.

I once heard of a gentleman who was so provoked at the arguments of his opponent, which he could not answer, that he threw a glass of water into his face; whereupon the injured man, after quietly wiping his face, coolly exclaimed:

"Well, that is a digression; now for the argument!"

This man, who loved argument better than life, deserved a better opponent; he had the merit of coolness, which few arguers possess; and as for his opponent, it is evident that an angel from heaven could not, if he tried, have convinced him of his error. Besides, such an incident with a less cool arguer would have been the signal for a row, which is frequently the upshot of arguments.

Let us see how well-educated people act in this matter. Mr. Edward Everett Hale, who had been reading Galt's book on Hereditary Genius, and had talked much with his friends on the subject, once asked Mr. Emerson if he believed in the doctrine. "No," said he, "I do not. If there were any truth in it, there would have been many Schillers and Goethes in Weimar." That was sufficient. Mr. Hale did not press the point. He saw that the sage had made up his mind on the subject, and that argument would be vain.

A man of culture frankly states his views on any given subject, without hesitating to say wherein he is ignorant or doubtful; and he is ever ready for correction or enlightenment wherever he finds it. He never presses his hearers to accept his views; nor would he (except with an honest desire for enlightenment) press another for his views on a disputed point. Among certain free-thinkers in Germany, with whom I had often occasion to talk, they would say, when the subject of religion was touched: "If you have any faith in you, by all means keep it; we would not for the world argue it out of you; there is happiness in it." "Well, how do you come to *your* conclusions?" "Of ourselves; in the course of our studies, our conclusions were forced on us."

These men, although they were free-thinkers, and frankly confessed that they had nothing to stand on, and knew nothing of a future life, declared they would be sorry to destroy the foundations on which any other man stood. That is what I call true liberality and toleration towards others. When the truth of a proposition could neither be proved nor disproved—in fact, they called it the unknowable—they did well to let it alone. It is true that the best talker, like the best book, is he who makes you think most; but the arguer does more than this: he forces his arguments down your throat.

One may prepare for argument, but never for conversation. He who does so will be sure to walk on

stilts, and fatigue himself without edifying the others. Preparation kills conversation. The mind so prepared remains fettered within prearranged limits, and cannot work in freedom. All must come naturally and spontaneously in conversation; occasion, accident, and circumstance may start or turn the tide anywhere, each speaker leaving the other to wander whither he will. So long as there is any connection in the talk, it is all right. The whole charm of conversation lies in this freedom of range, where no effort or exertion is required, and where the mind follows no guide but inclination and common sense.

"I have had much talk with many people in England," said Oliver Wendell Holmes to Max Müller, "but with you I have had a real conversation." They talked on whatever they liked, without any prearrangement at all, and expressed their views so freely to each other, that both were edified.

The less one thinks of what he is going to say in conversation, the better he will say it. The thought must grow out of what the others are saying. Precise speech, too, is fatal to conversation. If the speaker thinks of how he speaks and not of what he speaks, his hearers will think of this, too, which will destroy all spontaneity of thought on both sides. No man of sense attempts to speak in conversation as if he were addressing a convention with reporters before him. Speech-making and conversing are two things. Prepared witticisms, too, form no part of conversation.

Witticisms must come naturally or not at all. Prepared witticisms are like those clap-trap devices, born of the stage, which are intended, not to elicit thought, but to excite applause.

Debate must not be confounded with argument. A debate is a meeting for the express purpose of saying all that can be said for or against a given proposition, with the view of finding out the truth or the best course to pursue, and deciding the same by a majority of voices. "Debate is a great advantage," says Mr. G. J. Holyoake, in his excellent little book on Public Speaking, "and when you win a sincere and able man to discuss with you, you should enter upon the exercise with gratitude. Your opponent may be the enemy of your opinions, but he is the friend of your improvement; and the more ably he confronts you, the more he serves you, if you have the wit to profit by it." Then he continues in this admirable strain: "An established truth is that which is generally received after examination in a fair field of inquiry. Now it is evident that, though truth may be discovered by research, it can be established only by debate. It is a mistake to suppose that it can be taught absolutely by itself. We learn truth by contrast. It is only when opposed to error that we witness truth's capabilities and feel its power. . . . Seek conflict only with sincere men. Concede your opponent the first and the last word. Let him appoint the chairman. Let him speak double time if he desires it. . . . Explain

to him the outline of the course you intend to pursue; acquaint him with the books you shall quote, the authorities you shall cite, the propositions you shall endeavour to prove, and the concessions you shall demand. And do this without expecting the same at his hands. He will not now be taken by surprise. He will be pre-warned and pre-armed. He will have time to prepare, and if the truth is in him it ought to come out. If you feel you cannot give these advantages to your opponent, suspect yourself and suspect your side of the question. . . . Unless we have prated of philosophy in vain, we ought never to take up arms against an enemy without at the same time keeping his welfare in view, as well as our own defence."

The young reader will now see how completely different conversation is from argument and debate, and how each has its separate function and place. While a word or a phrase, accidentally dropped, sometimes decides the character of a conversation, and leads to the largest expression of thought, a debate must remain within well-defined limits. It must not get away from the subject discussed; for that would be out of order. While in conversation a chance remark often brings out hidden or unsuspected veins of thought or knowledge, this seldom happens in debate. Those who meet for conversation are ready for any line of thought; debaters and arguers only for one line.

The best converser is he whose talk is most suggestive, who touches the springs of thought and causes

his hearers to bring forth the most interesting, instructive, or amusing things they know. Especially is the humorous and amusing talker highly to be prized; for he not only refreshes the mind but the body, and helps to dispel reserve and loosen the tongues of his auditors. To be a humourist, a man must have self-poise; intense, nervous people are never humourists. The man who imagines that the whole world is waiting to hear what he has to say on a subject is devoid of humour, and is a bore in conversation.

It is often when people meet for some other object than mere talk that the best conversation takes place; for here it comes unsolicited as an incident, not the main object of the meeting, and the thoughts expressed are spontaneous and sincere. The most pleasant conversations I ever enjoyed were in a company of ladies and gentlemen who met to read Shakespeare, but whose thoughts and experiences, called forth by the passages read, were by far the best part of the entertainment. It is always on such occasions that we find that careless ease, that spontaneous utterance of thought, which is the charm of conversation. As the preacher who loses his notes is sometimes happier in his discourse than when he has them, so the man who accidentally drops into a conversation often surpasses himself in the freshness and beauty of his utterances.

No conversation is more interesting than that which is founded on actual experiences. We listen with delight to everything that is told of what one has per-

sonally undergone or seen, or to what has been said or done by people of whom we have heard. Even the writer or the public speaker can give us nothing to which we listen with more interest than illustrations from his own experience. Most good books, even the novels, are pictures or descriptions of the authors' personal experiences. In a long discourse on Rome and early Roman history, the one thing that impressed me and stirred my imagination powerfully was the statement that the speaker had himself when in Rome gone down into one of those ancient subterranean prison-chambers which are cut in the solid rock, where he saw the paths worn in the rock by the feet of the poor prisoners who had trodden those awful dens for years. What a picture of human misery that single fact brings before the mind, and what an example it is of "man's inhumanity to man," which "makes countless thousands mourn!"

CHAPTER IX

REPORTING CONVERSATIONS.—A GROUP OF FAMOUS TALKERS

"The intimate and independent conversation of important men is the cream of life."—*Monckton Milnes.*

"Johnson's personality has been transmitted to us chiefly by a record of his talk."—*Augustine Birrell.*

A HIGHLY intelligent gentleman once said to me: "I shall never forget the first time I read Boswell's life of Johnson. I thought of nothing else for months afterwards. It tinged my whole life in a manner that no other book did. I felt as if I were admitted into the society, and made the intimate companion, of a class of men and women of whom I had heard much, but had known little; and now I knew them like personal friends. I returned to the book day after day as to a company of interesting and pleasant people whom I knew, and whose conversation I loved; and I know that when I got through I was quite a different man to what I was when I began."

To say that a literary work brings the reader into good company, and makes him better, gentler, wiser than he was before, is the highest praise that can be given to any book. No wonder that Boswell is read by every man who has any taste for literature, or cares

for the conversation of well-educated people; no wonder that it is the favourite book of intellectual people everywhere; for probably no other biography in existence has given so much pleasure and instruction to its readers, or presented such a perfect picture of the life and talk of the people of the day. The conversation of the Doctor and his friends is the great attraction. We see them at all hours; hear their talk on all subjects; and know their manner of living, their manner of thinking, their hopes and fears, under all circumstances.

Poor Boswell! he had his faults—who has none?—but his merits have never been fully recognised. There have been many men who have talked as well as Johnson; some much better, no doubt; but who has had his talk so well reported? Crabbe Robinson—whom I esteem highly—wrote a book of about a thousand pages concerning the many eminent men whom he had known; and yet he has been unable to report a single conversation with one of them! All he can say is, "We talked a good deal about this and that," or, "His talk was brilliant and I was delighted with him," and so on. There is no life in such reports—anybody could say as much. His book is curious, but little instructive; amusing in a way, but little edifying. Boswell's is all this and much more. He brings not only his men and women in bodily presence before us, but he reveals their very souls to us.

Few men can perform such a feat. It needs a pe-

culiar genius to do such a thing. Consider for a moment those famous talkers, Mackintosh and Mirabeau, Macaulay and Sydney Smith; what has become of their talks? Who has had a taste of them except those who heard them? Who has reported them? We have nothing but a few scraps, and "it was brilliant, fascinating, captivating," and all that; which, compared with Boswell's reports, is wind against meat and drink, or the froth of champagne instead of the champagne itself. This is all that common writers or reporters can say of a conversation; they have nothing of the real reporting talent, which is a divine gift; I might call it a genius for reproducing and firmly fixing the evanescent.

Lord Lytton gives somewhere—I regret I cannot now lay hands on it—a striking example of the way in which a fine gentleman reported to a company of ladies and gentlemen one of Sir Robert Peel's speeches. Sir Robert had spoken on the Corn Laws, and the gentleman's report was something like this:

"Well, what did Sir Robert say?"
"Oh, it was fine, very fine, indeed."
"But what did he say?"
"Well, he said, the corn-laws—yes, the corn-laws—he said the corn-laws were, you know—well, it was awful—the corn-laws were—h'm—bad, you know; and—h'm—the number of people, you know—it was splendid; I never heard a more eloquent speech in my life!"

Who has not known such reporters? I have known an illiterate Jew give a better report than that in two

words. Having noticed a crowd of Israelites waiting before the door of a New York theatre, I asked one of them what the meeting was for. "Dat ain't no meeting," said he. "What is it then?" "Dat is a play." "What is the play about?" "There is one Christian king, you know, and he got a Jewess for a wife." That gave me an idea of the play at once; but who could tell what Sir Robert Peel said about the corn-laws?

When Macaulay said of Boswell that "his fame marvellously resembled infamy," and that his work, "though it delighted the world, brought nothing but contempt to the author," he did him great injustice, and said what is not true. "Must one who drives fat oxen himself be fat?" Boswell revives for us a bygone age, enables us to live and move among the brightest spirits of that age, to listen to their conversation and enjoy their companionship—what more did Macaulay do in his famous "History of England"? Or did he do as much? Did he do this so well, so correctly and impartially, as Boswell did?

Speaking of Macaulay's brilliant conversation with his friends, Mr. Trevelyan, his biographer, says: "With life before them, and each intent on his own future, none among that group of friends had the mind to play Boswell to the others." Had the *mind?* Of course not. Not one in a thousand has such a mind as Boswell's. His words remind me of Charles Lamb's commentary on Wordsworth's criticism of

Shakespeare: Wordsworth declared that he considered Shakespeare greatly overrated, and that "if he had a mind to, he could write exactly like Shakespeare." "So you see," said Lamb, with exquisite humour, "it was only *the mind* that was lacking!"

It needed a Plato to reproduce the conversations of Socrates, and none but a man of rare genius could reproduce those of Johnson and his friends. It has always seemed to me an additional evidence of the inspiration of the Gospels that plain men such as the Apostles could reproduce so admirably the conversations of our Lord.

The gifted Mrs. Beecher Stowe tried her hand at this kind of work, and made such a botch of it that Macaulay himself said of her report:

"She puts into my mouth a good deal of stuff that I never uttered;" and doubtless she failed to put down what he did utter. Macaulay, who never tried anything of the kind himself, forgot that one who takes part in a conversation thinks more of what he is going to say himself than of remembering what the others say. That's where the reporter-genius has the advantage—he has little or nothing to say himself, but thinks much of what others say. It is easier far to invent conversations than to report them.

Mr. G. W. Smalley, late London correspondent of the New York *Tribune*, gives in one of his London letters to the *Tribune* a new and striking characterisation of Macaulay as a talker, which is evidently the truth:

"The literature, the biographical literature, the reminiscences of the last fifty years," he says, "are full of the renown of great talkers. Macaulay may be taken as a type of them. He was the superior of all in his own style; but the style was one which prevailed, and it is fair to judge it by its best example or exponent. . . . I have asked a number of persons who knew Macaulay well; who met him often; who made part of the world he lived in; who sat with him at table; who listened to him—whether his immense reputation was deserved, and whether he would now be thought a good talker. I quote nobody, but I sum up the general sense of all the answers in one phrase—he would be thought a bore. Whether that is a reflection on Macaulay or on the society of his day, is an open question; but the opinion cannot be far wrong. 'Macaulay,' said a talker whose conversation ranged over three generations, 'did not talk; he lectured. He chose his own subject. It mattered little what, and he delivered a discourse on it; poured out masses of facts, of arguments, of historical illustrations. He was not witty; he had no humour; he was not a critic, as he himself confessed; he was devoid of imagination or poetic faculty. But he possessed the most prodigious memory ever possessed by a human being, and on this he drew, without stint and without end. People in those days listened to him; his authority was established; his audience docile; nobody interrupted; controversy was out of the question. Now,' continued the witness, 'no dinner-table would stand it; he would be stopped, contradicted, his long stories vetoed; no monopoly or monopolist is tolerated. If you wanted to know about Queen Anne, you would go home, and read a cyclopædia.' "

"This is perhaps overstated," continues Mr. Smalley; "the picture is overdrawn; Macaulay is made as much too black as Trevelyan made him too white. But it is true in substance, and it will give you a notion of the change in the fashion of talk which has really taken place."

And when we recall Sydney Smith's remark at one of Rogers's breakfasts, when he saw through the window that Macaulay was coming: "Now, gentlemen, if you have anything to say, say it at once; for here comes Macaulay! And when he gets a-going, not one of you will have a chance!" the picture does not seem to be overdrawn. So that Macaulay's characterisation of Boswell's fame as "marvellously resembling infamy," might be offset by the remark that his own fame as a talker marvellously resembles puffery. It is evident to me that that fine spirit, Sydney Smith, felt himself suppressed, as others did, by Macaulay's all-engrossing, monopolising talk; for in his last sickness he was heard to murmur, "Ah, Macaulay will be sorry when I am gone that he never heard my voice; he will wish he had sometimes let me edge in a word."*

There is only one man in literature who had the wit and the skill to report his own conversation—who ac-

* Curiously enough, while this book was passing through the press I happened to have noticed in one of Mrs. Brookfield's letters ("Mrs. Brookfield and her Circle") a passage which strongly confirms Mr. Smalley's report. "I remember sitting next to Macaulay at dinner," she says, "at one period of which I asked him if he admired Jane Austen's works. He made no reply till a lull occurred in the general conversation, when he

tually took notes of it and expanded it into a book. Every man will know whom I mean—the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,"—whose book gives light and life to many another breakfast table. Dr. Holmes, who gives his book the sub-title, "Every Man His Own Boswell," gives this advice to young authors: "It is a capital plan to carry a tablet with you, and when you find yourself felicitous to take notes of your own conversation." Find yourself felicitous! Yes; but how few ever find themselves so felicitous as he did! He was not only felicitous as a talker, but as a reporter of talk, which is saying a good deal. The boarding-house and the landlady, the schoolmistress and the professor, and the rest may be all inventions; but assuredly the talk is not—it smacks too strongly of real talk. And what a world of wit and wisdom there is in it! One who has the "Autocrat" in his pocket has small need of other company; for whenever he feels like having company, he has only to dip into it and find the liveliest and most entertaining company he can desire.

Let any one who has enjoyed the conversation of a good talker sit down and try to reproduce one of his

announced: 'Mrs. Brookfield has asked me if I admired Jane Austen's novels, to which I reply'—and then he entered into a lengthy dissertation, to which all listened, but into which no one else dared intrude; finally describing how some time ago he had found himself by the plain marble slab which covered the remains of Jane Austen, when he said to himself, 'Here's a woman who ought to have had a national monument.'"

talks, and he will see how difficult it is. He will find it almost as hard as painting a face from memory. Mrs. Ritchie (Thackeray's daughter), in speaking of the delightful conversations she had with Mr. John Ruskin, which she was unable to report, declares that the "finest conversations are the hardest to report; indeed they cannot be reported at all; it is only those in which specific truths are announced or dogmatical assertions made which can be reported." This may be so; and yet it looks like a side thrust at Johnson and Boswell, but Boswell reported the talk of his friends as well as that of the doctor himself, and among these were some of the finest talkers the world ever saw—Burke, for instance. There were gentlemen of all ranks and professions who talked with Johnson; orators, authors, artists, statesmen, noblemen, clergymen, tradesmen; and their talk is all set down in the most complete way. He who thinks Boswell's task was easy might as well think the same of Reynolds's pictures and Garrick's dramatic representations. It looks easily done; everything looks quite natural and simple enough; but so does the work of all great artists, inventors and discoverers. Columbus's discovery of the New World was quite easy—he had only to sail right on and he was sure to strike some country—and yet there was only one man in five thousand years who thought of it or attempted it!

A striking example of "how not to do it" is given by a Mr. Glennie, college-bred and learned man though

he was, in his "Report of Conversations with Henry Thomas Buckle," the historian. Mr. Glennie had travelled with him in the East. From the quiet yet complete exposure of his report by Henry Alfred Huth in his admirable "Life of Buckle," it is evident that Glennie has put into Buckle's mouth much that he never said, much that is the very opposite of what he said, much that was never said by any one, and far too much of what Glennie himself said or pretends to have said. So that this man by his ill-advised and presumptuous attempt at reporting the conversations of a great man has simply covered himself with derision and contempt.

But the newspaper interviewer reports conversations. So he does; but how? He takes no part in the conversation himself; his report is simply a sort of catechising the person interviewed; for there is no interchange of thought between the two. The interviewed feels as if he were undergoing a cross-examination, in which his fate depends on his answers; while the interviewer sets down his answers as worth so many dollars a column.

"I wish I could remember half the good things," says Justin McCarthy, "that passed that night between law and physic—I mean between Sir Alexander Cockburn and Dr. Quain. Both men were worthy to have found a Boswell. Sir Alexander was one of the few men who, in our time, have won fame alike at the Bar, in the House of Commons, and on the Bench.

But he ought to have won fame also as the sayer of good things, and to win such fame he needed only a faithful chronicler. And as for Dr. Quain, nobody could tell a good story better, no one could freshen up an old story into such new and animated life. When listening to his wonderful flow of anecdote, delivered with his own inimitable humour, I have often thought of the advice given by a fellow-countryman of his and mine, to a story-teller, 'Niver borrow; always invint!' "

A clever Frenchwoman, who had listened to the talk of Voltaire, thus wrote after one of his conversations: "What is there that he did not speak of? Poetry, science, art; all in the tone of badinage and good breeding. I should like to be able to report to you that charming conversation, but, alas! it is not in me to do it." Of course, it needed the gift of a Boswell to do that, and this lady had the wit to perceive, and the frankness to confess, that she did not possess such a gift. She had, in fact, greater discernment than the historian and essayist, who, though he could praise the genius of authors and artists, princes and statesmen, failed to see that he who caught the living talk of the finest and brightest spirits of his time had gifts as rare and literary skill as admirable as his own, or as that of many of the famous men whom he so graphically describes in his celebrated "History of England," or in his charming essays on English statesmen and authors.

CHAPTER X

REPARTEE—WIT AND HUMOUR

"Impromptu is the touchstone of wit."—*Molière.*

The French say "there is nothing so absent as presence of mind." It is certainly true that every man or woman capable of repartee must be eminently endowed with that quality of mind. He must have coolness, or, in other words, a not easily flustered disposition; for he must always have his wits about him, and be capable of saying or doing the best thing that can be said or done under the circumstances.

Some one has wittily defined wit as "the power to say what one would like to have said if he had only thought of it!" The Scotchman's wit comes afterwards, while an Irishman's wit is always on tap. Yet, while that may be true, the witty man is always exceptional anyway. The two wittiest Germans in literature, Saphir and Heine, had Jewish blood in their veins; and I am inclined to think that one Englishman, Benjamin Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield), owed much of his witty genius to the same source. He was always ready with a bright repartee on every occasion. When, for instance, he came forward as a poor, penniless young man to contest a seat in Parlia-

ment against the well-known Colonel Grey, and was speaking to a large crowd in the hustings, some one cried out: "We all know what Colonel Grey stands for; what do you stand on?" he instantly replied, "I stand on my head!" Could any man but a man of admirable coolness and ready wit have given such an answer?

Probably few men had a cooler head (and less conscience) than Napoleon's famous minister, Talleyrand, who saved himself, even in the immediate presence of death, by his coolness and presence of mind. When, during the French Revolution, a sans-culotte mob had caught him and were about to string him up to a lamp-post, he turned a smiling face on the murderous crowd and exclaimed good-naturedly:

"Do you think, my friends, that this lamp will give you better light when I am hanged to its post?" This caused some of them to laugh, and then one cried, "Let the witty rogue go!" so he escaped. Yet he had as bitter a wit as any mortal who ever lived. When a sick friend whom he was visiting complained of feeling the pains of hell, Talleyrand exclaimed, "What! already?" When Madame de Staël, who squinted slightly in one eye, met him limping along the street (for he had a game leg, *courbé*, or crooked), she said to him: "Comment est votre pauvre jambe, monsieur?" "Comme *vous voyez*, madame," he replied, with a leer.

Not every man, however, not even the most experi-

enced, can always control his mind on the sudden appearance of danger or death. If Captain Luce of the *Arctic* had only kept cool and thought for a moment, when his vessel was struck by a schooner in a Newfoundland fog, and not immediately sent off his first mate, Gourley, to inquire after the other vessel before finding out the damage done to his own, he might thus have saved the lives of the thousand passengers on his own ship, who were nearly all lost on that occasion.

Few men can act so coolly and effectively in danger as Lord Berkeley, who had always maintained that it was no disgrace to be overcome by superior numbers, but that he would never surrender to a single highwayman. One night his coach was stopped on Hounslow Heath by a man on horseback, who put his head in at the window and said:

"I understand you are Lord Berkeley?"

"I am."

"I have heard that you have always boasted you would never surrender to a single highwayman."

"I have."

"Well," presenting a pistol, "I am a single highwayman, and I say, 'Your money or your life!'"

"You cowardly dog," said Lord Berkeley, "do you think I can't see your confederate skulking behind you?"

The highwayman, who was really alone, looked hurriedly behind, and Lord Berkeley shot him through

the head. His lordship had not only coolness and courage, but wonderful presence of mind.

Women generally are not noted for wit; they have other qualities that make up for that, and probably quite as much coolness in danger as men have. Yet I have never heard or read of better repartees than some of those made by women. When the Laird of Combie, who was not noted for probity, found himself coolly treated at a dinner-party by Miss MacNabb, who was more noted for probity and benevolence than for beauty, he thought he would revenge himself on her by giving as a toast, "Here's to honest men and bonnie lasses!" bowing to Miss MacNabb. The lady took up her glass, and looking him full in the face, exclaimed, "Well, Combie, we may indeed drink that; for I am sure it applies to neither you nor me!"

When a lady at a dinner-party asked Beau Brummel, the prince of dandies and the most insolent of men, if he would "take a cup of tea," he replied:

"Thank you, ma'am; I never *take* anything but physic."

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied the lady; "you also take liberties." That was a well-deserved and admirable shot.

I never think of Brummel, the bosom companion of the Prince Regent, and the most admired dandy of his day, without seeing him in my mind's eye in his later years—after his long enforced sojourn in France, where he had finally fled from his creditors—now

poor, thin, threadbare, and deserted by all the world —appearing before his quondam friend, the Prince Regent, now George IV., when the latter landed in France—I see him, I say, approaching the king joyfully with "Hail, Royal George!" and looking as if he were once more to be the companion of princes; and then I hear the king's exclamation:

"Good God! Is that you, Brummel! Coachman, drive on!"

And thus the "first gentleman of Europe" left his poverty-stricken friend standing there, as poor, pitiful, deserted, and wretched as ever! "Put not your trust in princes!"

How forcibly this meeting of a worthless king and his former friend and companion recalls the final meeting of Prince Hal and Falstaff, when the former became king! But Prince Hal acted royally, while George IV. acted heartlessly, shabbily.

But let us return to the repartees, for which kings are not noted, though some of them have said clever things. When Louis XIV. was visiting the city of Beaune, and tasting and praising the wine of that region, the mayor exclaimed:

"Oh, sire, that is not to be compared with what we have in our cellars!"

"Which you no doubt keep for a better occasion," said the king.

But it takes a woman to hit hard, without overstepping the bounds of propriety. When the French

ambassador, shortly after the Franco-Prussian War, was bitterly complaining to a lady at a large reception-party in London, that England had not interfered in behalf of France, he concluded with these words: "But after all, it is but what we might have expected—we have always believed you were a nation of shopkeepers, and now we know you are!" "And we," replied the lady, "have always believed you were a nation of soldiers, and now we know you are not!"

Touch an Englishman on his nationality, and he is apt to be stung into a good retort. When one of the Viennese gallants at a gay company in Vienna rudely remarked that it was strange that all the best company in that city except the English spoke the French language, an Englishman replied: "Oh, no! that is not at all strange; for the French army has not been twice to London to teach them!"

When Matthew Prior was acting as English ambassador at the Court of France, he was shown through the famous palace at Versailles, with pictures of the victories of Louis XIV. on the walls, and so forth; and when he was asked if *his* master, William III., had any such decorations, he replied: "The monuments of my master's actions are seen everywhere except in his own house!" "Bravo, Mat!" exclaimed Thackeray, on telling this story.

At a dinner at Balliol College the master's guests were discussing the careers of two Balliol men, one of whom had just been made a judge and the other a

bishop. "Oh," said one, "I think the bishop is the greater man; for a judge can, at the most, only say, 'You be hanged!' but a bishop can say, 'You be damned!'" "Yes," said the master, "but if the judge says, 'You be hanged!' you are hanged!"

Frances Countess Waldegrave, who had previously been married three times, took as her fourth husband an Irishman, Mr. Chichester Fortescue, who was shortly afterwards made chief secretary for Ireland. The first night that Lady Waldegrave and Mr. Fortescue appeared at the theatre in Dublin, an irreverent wag in the gallery called out, "Which of the four do you like best, my lady?" whereupon the instant answer came from the secretary's box, "Why, the Irishman, of course!"

I have given one instance of Disraeli's readiness in reply. On another occasion, when seeking re-election, his opponent, who had been a man of notoriously profligate life, produced at the hustings the Radical manifesto which Mr. Disraeli had issued twenty years before. "What do you say to that, sir?" "I say," replied Disraeli, "that we all sow our wild oats, and no man knows the meaning of that phrase better than *you*, sir!"

That Disraeli had essentially a sarcastic turn of mind is strongly evidenced by the way in which he proposed to acknowledge to the author the receipt of an indifferent or unwelcome book: "I have received your valuable book, and shall lose no time in reading

it!" What do you think of that, sir? And yet no man could flatter better than he. He is said to have been a true courtier, not by training or study, but by genius; that is how he got along so well with Queen Victoria, whom he made Empress of India. In writing to her, he used the phrase, "We authors!"

Here is a repartee which Mr. Gladstone pronounced the best ever made in Parliament. Sir Francis Burdett, who had been a Radical and afterwards (like Disraeli) became a Tory, said, while attacking his former associates with all the bitterness of a renegade, "The most offensive thing in the world is the cant of patriotism;" to which Lord John Russell replied: "I agree with the honorable member that the cant of patriotism is a very offensive thing; but the *recant* of patriotism is still more offensive!" No reply could be made to that hit.

Few ecclesiastics had the bright wit of Cardinal Manning, who often floored an antagonist by a witty answer.

"What are you going to do in life?" asked the Cardinal of a flippant undergraduate of Oxford.

"Oh, I'm going to take holy orders."

"Take care that you get them, my son," was the reply.

When a Fellow of Oriel had behaved rather extravagantly at a dinner overnight, he essayed, on coming out of chapel next morning, to apologise to another Fellow of the college: "My friend, I'm afraid I made

rather a fool of myself last night." "My dear fellow," was the reply, "I assure you I observed nothing unusual." It is a question, however, whether this hit was intended or said unconsciously or sarcastically. Sometimes a man makes a sharp repartee which he never intended.

Chief Justice Story attended a public dinner in Boston at which Edward Everett was present. Desiring to pay a delicate compliment to the latter, the learned judge proposed as a toast, "Fame follows merit where Ever-ett goes!" Whereupon the brilliant scholar rose and responded, "To whatever heights judicial learning may attain in this country, it will never go above one Story!" That is certainly a pretty story.

At an auction sale in a Scottish village, the auctioneer was trying to sell a number of utensils, including a porridge pot. The auctioneer was shouting in vain for a bid, when his eye caught sight of a well-known worthy, the beadle, standing at the back of the crowd, and he shouted out:

"Maister MacTavish, make me an offer for this pot. Why, it would make a splendid kirk-bell!"

"Aye," replied the beadle, "if your tongue were in it!"

"Sharper than a serpent's tooth is a thankless child," says Solomon. I imagine Sir Richard Bethel must have experienced the truth of this to the full. On reaching the peerage, Sir Richard sent for his son and heir, and thus addressed him:

"Richard, I have sent for you to say that Lord Campbell died last night, and that I have accepted the Marble Chair. I shall, of course, be made a peer; and at my decease that peerage must devolve upon you. I have sent for you to tell you this; and further, that when at my death that peerage does so devolve, I am afraid it will pass to the greatest rascal in her Majesty's dominions!"

The worthy son thought for a moment, and then coolly replied:

"Well, sir, considering that *you* will then be dead, I suppose it will!"

Is there anything in the records of insolence that surpasses this? I imagine Peter Pindar himself would have been shocked by it.

Here is one of Pindar's effusions, however, which will, I think, match it—four lines addressed to a noble lady who had lost her favourite pig, which she had named Cupid:

> Oh, dry that tear, so round and big,
> Nor waste in sighs your precious wind!
> Death takes only a single pig—
> Your lord and son are still behind!

Probably no public man in America surpassed Abraham Lincoln in the power of repartee, of which a hundred examples might be given; but the following will suffice for the present. In the famous contest with Stephen A. Douglas for the United States senatorship, Douglas taxed his opponent with having

filled many low-down situations, which was done with the view of degrading him in the eyes of the people. "What Judge Douglas has said," replied Lincoln, "is true, every word of it. I have worked on a farm; I have split rails; I have worked on a flat-boat; I have tried to practise law. But there is just one thing that Judge Douglas forgot to relate. He says that I sold liquor over a counter. He forgot to tell you that while I was on the inside of the counter, the judge was on the other!"

To say something sharp to a king or an emperor is generally regarded as anything but tactful; but some men and some women have done this in a handsome way. A noble Italian lady, who was introduced to the Emperor Napoleon Buonaparte at Paris, gave him tit for tat in a way not to be forgotten. The latter is the correct spelling of Bonaparte's name, which shows his Italian origin, and means "a good part" or "a good many."

"Tutti Italiani sono perfidi," said Napoleon to her.

"Non tutti, signor," she replied, "ma *buona parte!*" (Not all, but a good many!)

That retort must have punctured, I imagine, even his thick skin.

No wonder he hated talented women, as he did Madame de Staël, who saw through him, and described him correctly. What have women to do with governments and governors? Ce n'est que la verité qui blesse. His idea of a great woman was she who

had the most children—to go into his armies, of course. He had no use for women of talent.

Equally good was Lady Blessington's reply to Louis Napoleon, when that cutthroat had made himself Emperor of France. When this man was a penniless adventurer in London he had often received the hospitalities of Gore House, of which Lady Blessington was the hostess; so when her ladyship had lost everything, and even her furniture was sold at public auction, she made a trip to Paris, in company with her old friend, the Count d'Orsay. She remained there for some weeks, and although all Paris knew of her presence, no notice of her was taken by the Court, no invitation came from the Tuileries. At length at a great reception at which she was present, her former guest, now emperor, arrived, and while the crowd were bowing and courtesying to him as he passed, his eye caught sight of Lady Blessington.

"Ah, milady Blessington! restez-vous longtemps à Paris?" said he.

"Et vous, sire?" she replied.

That was all, but there was a vast deal in those three words.

There is no record of the tyrant's answer; but we can guess how he felt the hit. Had she lived, she would have shed no tears at the news of his disastrous defeat, dethronement, and exile.

Here are two ladies who tilted beautifully at repartee at an accidental meeting. After Miss Margaret

Moore and Lady Manners had had honours conferred on their families, they met in the street; and as Miss Moore seemed to meet Lady Manners in a somewhat distant manner, her ladyship remarked: "Honores mutant Mores!" Whereupon Miss Moore replied: "That goes better in English, madam—honours change Manners!" What two men could have equalled that?

When Lord Granville, in inviting Mr. Lowell, then American ambassador in London, to a dinner-party at his house, his lordship said he knew that Mr. Lowell was the most engaged man in London, but hoped he would be able to come. Mr. Lowell replied: "The most engaged man in London gladly accepts the kind invitation of the most engaging!"

A man named Dunlop having defied Theodore Hook to make a pun on his name, the latter instantly replied: "Oh, that's easy—just lop off one half of it, and 'tis done!" Could anything be happier?

When Randolph of Roanoke met a political adversary in the street, the latter looked viciously at him and cried: "I never give the wall to a scoundrel!" Whereupon Randolph instantly replied, "I always do!" and passed on the other side. I suppose it was this same fellow to whom he referred as the "vacant member" when pronouncing a eulogy on a deceased member of Congress: "Yes, Mr. Chairman, our deceased brother was a noble, high-minded, well-informed statesman, whose seat is now *vacant!*"—pointing with his long, skinny finger to the successor of the de-

ceased—"and it will be long before we shall see his like again!" The gentleman referred to was ever afterwards known as the "vacant member."

Mr. Evarts's reply to Lord Coleridge while they were standing on the left bank of the Potomac is well known:

"Is it true," said Lord Coleridge, "that Washington threw a silver dollar across the Potomac?"

"Very likely," returned Mr. Evarts, "very likely; for you know a dollar went much farther in those days than it does now!"

That was graceful, but Evarts afterwards declared that, were it not for fear of discourtesy, he could have made a much better answer, viz: "In fact, he did better than that—he threw a sovereign across the Atlantic!"

CHAPTER XI

WIT AND HUMOUR (CONTINUED)

"How absolute the knave is! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us."—*Hamlet.*

A SENSE of humour is such a good thing that Dr. Van Dyke—himself a good example—declares that it is "a means of grace." And Dr. Watson, in "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush," makes one of his characters express the same thought in a forcible way. "He has nae mair sense o' humour than an owl," says Mrs. Macfadden, speaking of a Scotch minister, "and I hold that a man without humour shouldna be allowed into a poopit. I hear that they have nae examination in humour at the college; it's an awfu' want; for it would keep mony a dreich [dry] body out."

In fact, there is no profession, not even that of a clergyman, in which a sense of humour is not of advantage. Besides, one witty sentence may make a man merry for half a day. A wearisome advocate was making a long plea before Lord Norbury when a big jackass in the street suddenly brayed loudly.

"One at a time! One at a time!" cried Lord Norbury. . . . "'Tis a fine spring day, Pat—that will bring up everything underground." "God forbid, sir," said Pat; "I have buried three wives!"

When a young country clergyman came to London, ambitious to display his talents before a London audience, the Rev. Horace Binney gave him an opportunity, and the young preacher selected as his text the passage in Revelations about the white horse ascending and descending. After looking at the great audience, and repeating his text, his voice failed him, and he broke down completely, and sat down. Mr. Binney, after a few words, dismissed the audience; and the young preacher, who had ascended to the pulpit two steps at a time, now came down very slowly and meekly; whereupon Mr. Binney said to him: "Now, my young friend, if you had ascended as you have descended, you might have descended as you ascended!"

It is well known that nearly all our great writers, Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens, Irving, Holmes, Lowell, Cervantes, Molière, Goethe, were largely endowed with humour. Carlyle says that a man without humour has only half a mind. That assertion, however, like many others of his, is too sweeping. Had Newton, or Dante, or Copernicus, or Milton, or Washington, or Sumner, only half a mind? Charles Sumner, great orator, scholar, and statesman as he was, could hardly see the point of a joke. No; a sense of humour is perhaps

the most valuable quality of the mind; but there have been great men without it, or with very little of it. What a blessed thing it is to be able to see the humorous side of things, as well as the serious! When a young gentleman said to Dr. Van Dyke, "I am not going to join the church—they are all hypocrites there," the doctor coolly replied, "Never mind, my dear fellow; there's room for one more!" A humourless clergyman would have taken the assertion as an affront, and spoiled the whole thing.

The following reply by a little French-Canadian lawyer is quite as good as Henry Clapp's saying of a famous editor: "Yes, he is a self-made man, and he worships his creator!"

The little Canadian lawyer had to speak for his candidate at a bye-election in Ontario, at which the opposing candidate, who was no speaker, was present. The substance of the latter's speech was as follows: "Fellow-citizens! you know me—I'm a self-made man—you know me! I cannot make speeches." To which the little French lawyer replied: "Fellow-citoyens! I'm verra sorry ma freend could not coom—I'd like mooch you haf seen heem. He verra defferent from dis man dat have made heemself. I believe dat. But ma man—God made heem! And, ma freends, dere is joost as mooch deeference between de men as dere is between de makers!" That was all his speech; but it was enough to gain the seat for his "freend who could not coom!"

I think Sheridan never exhibited his ready wit more effectively than on the occasion when he met two royal dukes in Oxford Street, and one of them said to him:

"Sherry, we have been discussing the question whether you are more rogue or charlatan. What is your opinion?"

"Faith," replied the wit, taking each by the arm, "I believe I am between the two!"

When Thomas Jefferson arrived in France as ambassador from the United States, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs thus accosted him: "You have come to replace Dr. Franklin, I understand?"

"No, sir," he replied; "I have come to take the place of Dr. Franklin—no man can replace him!"

The Japanese don't like to be called Japs. A distinguished diplomat was travelling from Tokio to Yokohama, when an American in the car leaned across and said: "Say, what 'ese' are you, Chinese or Japanese?" Quick as thought the reply came, in perfect English: "May I inquire what 'key' are you, Yankee or monkey?"

Here is a good bit of ecclesiastical wit. Dr. Henson had prepared for a Chautauqua meeting a lecture entitled "Fools." There was an immense audience, and Bishop Vincent introduced the lecturer thus:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: We are to have a great treat this evening, in the shape of a lecture on 'Fools' by——"

There was a look of consternation in the faces

on the platform, and a ripple of laughter through the audience. Pausing until this subsided, the speaker continued:

" . . . one of the brightest men in the country!"

This witty surprise caused tumultuous merriment, and everybody was curious to hear how Dr. Henson would treat this unique introduction. He began:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: I am not half so big a fool as Dr. Vincent——"

Here the laughter broke forth again with redoubled vigour; and when it subsided he continued:

" . . . would have you believe!"

The roar that greeted this ready sally was such that it was some time before he could begin his lecture.

It is generally by some unpremeditated but opportune utterance that the orator creates the greatest enthusiasm or produces the most startling effect. At the great meeting at Exeter Hall, London, on the occasion of the death of President Garfield, where James Russell Lowell, then minister to England, presided and read a classic tribute, it was Bishop Simpson, of Philadelphia, that electrified the audience. After referring to the intimate relations between England and the United States; to the Queen, her sore bereavement when Prince Albert died, and to her message of sympathy to Mrs. Garfield, he exclaimed with intense fervour: "God bless Queen Victoria!" It was so unexpected that the whole audience, hitherto so quiet and solemn, rose and cheered the orator enthusi-

astically. Mr. Lowell seemed perplexed at first, but after a little time he joined in the demonstration. In the midst of the tumult the orator stood with folded arms, apparently as calm as though he were a fabled god who had invoked some mighty force.

A few days later, Dr. Buckley, who was present, said to Bishop Simpson: "Bishop, was the passage which produced this wonderful result committed to memory beforehand?"

"No," he replied; "I will confess to you I was as much surprised as Mr. Lowell at the effect of my words."

It was evident that it was not merely loyalty to Queen Victoria, but the touching presentation, eloquently expressed, of the two queens of kindred peoples in deep affliction expressing sympathy the one for the other, which caused such an uncommon outburst of feeling.

When a member of the Carlton Club declared that the lines of a certain new poet would be read when those of Virgil and Horace were forgotten, Porson, the great Greek scholar, answered: "Very likely, very likely; but not till then!"

Roland Hill, after preaching in a certain Baptist church, presented himself at the communion table to partake of the sacrament, when one of the elders whispered to him that, he not being one of their body, they could not welcome him to their table. "Oh," said he, "I beg your pardon; I thought it was the Lord's table."

Well, these are all good examples of repartee, of which many more could easily be given; but let us look for a moment at some merely humorous ones. Wit generally kicks or cuts; humour always smiles or soothes. First, *place aux dames!* When Grace Greenwood, at a tea-party in Boston, was about to leave, after telling a funny story, she was requested to tell one story more, when she replied: "Oh, no; you must excuse me; I cannot get more than one story high on a cup of tea!" While talking about the names of steamships, Miss Alcott said: "If these vessels are called the *Asia*, the *Persia*, and the *Scotia*, why not call one of them the *Nausea?*" This reminds me of another equally good. When the English editor of the *New Review*, which was intended to be a high-toned magazine, was complaining of the difficulty of finding a suitable title, a bright young lady said: "We have got the *Cornhill*, the *Ludgate*, and the *Strand*—why not call yours the *Cheapside?*"

Here are two German stories—the one merely amusing, the other witty. In German, the word *bekommen* means to get or receive; and so, at the foot of the Tyrol Mountains, an innkeeper, who supplied animals to ride up the mountains, put up this sign: "Here Englishmen and Americans become asses!"

The University of Giessen was once noted for its custom of exchanging degrees for dollars. Two Englishmen, after having thus secured their degrees, went off in high glee to dine and wine. After dinner, they

hired a carriage and drove up to the house of the dean, to whom they declared they wanted two more degrees for their horses. "Oh!" said the dean, "we don't sell degrees for horses! We sell them only to asses!"

"Who composed the 'Magic Flute'?" asked a lady of Mr. Gilbert at a dinner-party. "Mozart," he replied. "Is he still composing?" "No, madam; he is decomposing."

Shall I set down some specimens of Irish bulls? It is said that Parliament would be a dull place were it not for the amusing speeches of some of the Irish members. "The key of the Irish difficulty is not to be found in the empty pocket of the landlord!" "As long as the voice of Irish suffering is dumb, the ear of English compassion is deaf to it!" "The silence of the Irish members shall be heard no longer!" "If I have any partiality for the honourable member, it is against him!" "I answer boldly in the affirmative, No!" "Every man ought to be ready to give his last penny to save the remainder of his fortune!" "Give him a chance in order that he may redeem a character irretrievably lost!" "This measure will cause the population of Ireland to be decimated by two-thirds!" "That tax [on leather] will be hard on the barefooted peasantry of Ireland!"

Here is a Scotch witticism worthy of an Irishman. At an open-air meeting in which Sir John Douglas, a candidate for Parliament, was speaking, a dog began to bark, disturbing the orator; whereupon a man in

the crowd called out: "Hey, Jock! is that your doug?" "Na, na," replied Jock, "I am dougless!"

I once heard something of Lord North being disturbed by the barking of a dog while presenting his budget to Parliament, whereupon he exclaimed: "So it seems that the only one displeased with my budget is the member from Barkley!" That's how the English pronounce Berkeley.

William and John Scott, afterwards Lord Stowell and Lord Eldon, displayed their bright wit very early in their profession as lawyers. When they were young men at the Bar, they determined, having had a stroke of professional luck, to celebrate the occasion by having a dinner at a tavern and going to the play. When it was time to call for the reckoning, William dropped a guinea, which he and his brother searched for in vain; so they came to the conclusion that it had fallen between the boards of the uncarpeted floor.

"This is a bad job," said William; "we must give up the play."

"Stop a bit," said John; "I know a trick worth two of that;" and he called for the waiter.

"Betty," said he, "we've dropped two guineas. See if you can find them."

Betty went down on her hands and knees and found the one lost guinea, which had rolled under the fender.

"That's a very good girl," said John Scott, pocketing the coin, "and when you find the other you can keep it for your trouble."

And so the prudent brothers went with a light heart to the play, and so eventually to the Bench and to the Woolsack.

I wonder whether lawyers ever have any compunctions of conscience when they win by a clever trick like this. I hear some one say, "Of course not; that's their trade, and they can't help it!"

A certain Justice Day had a case before him of some duration and many technicalities; when the counsel, towards the conclusion of a long, wearisome speech, said:

"Then, my lord, comes the question of bags; they might have been full bags or half-full bags; or, again, my lord, they might have been empty bags."

"Or," interrupted the sorely tried judge, "they might have been wind-bags!"

Judge Bumblethorpe had been trespassing over a clover-field, when the mad charge of a bull caused him to run and make a wild somersault over a fence. He came up to the farmer who owned the field, and exclaimed in an angry tone:

"Is that your bull over there?"

"Wall, I guess it is."

"Well, sir, do you know what he has been doing?"

"Chasing ye, mebbe."

"Yes, sir, chasing me; and do you know who I am?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, sir, I am Judge Bumblethorpe."

"Is—that—so?" said the farmer, in a deliberate

manner. "Is—that—so? Why in thunder didn't ye tell the bull, judge?"

When a witness turns the tables on a lawyer, the other witnesses and the spectators usually enjoy the encounter hugely. In this case the lawyer's name was Missing, and he was defending a prisoner charged with stealing a donkey. The prosecutor had left the animal tied up to a gate, and when he returned it was gone. Missing was very severe in his examination of the witness.

"Do you mean to say that the donkey was stolen from the gate?"

"I mean to say, sir, that *the ass was Missing!*"

When the comedian Burton was in "trouble," a young lawyer was examining him as to how he spent his money, of which there were £3,000 unaccounted for. The young lawyer, putting on a severe, scrutinising face, exclaimed with much self-complacency:

"Now, sir, I want you to tell this court and jury how you used those £3,000."

"The lawyers got that," was Burton's quick reply.

The judge and audience were convulsed with laughter, and the counsellor was glad to let the comedian go.

Some curious scenes occur between the legal and the dramatic people, and usually the latter come off best.

Justice Garrow asked Rees, the mimic, in a case about bail, whether he was not an imitator.

"So they tell me."

"Tell you! You know it, sir. Are you not in the habit of taking people off?"

"Oh, yes, your lordship; and I shall take myself off the moment your lordship has done with me!"

This was something like the man who had a good practice, and yet his practices were questionable.

Counsel to prisoner: "Well, after the witness gave you a blow, what happened?"

"He gave me a third one!"

"You mean a second one?"

"No, sir; I landed him the second one."

In an important case in an English chancery court, a loquacious witness was asked:

"What sort of a man was he?"

The reply came swiftly:

"Just an undersized, red-faced little chap like yourself!"

"One more question," said the counsel in another case. "Has not an attempt been made to induce you to tell the court and the jury a different story?"

"Yes, sir; I guess you've tried about as hard as any of 'em!"

Counsel (fiercely): "Are you telling the truth?"

Witness (wearily): "As much of it as you will let me!"

"And so," said the counsel in another case, "Duffy called you a scoundrel?"

"He did, sir."

"And did you attempt to defend yourself?"

"Did I? You ought to see Duffy!"

With all its difficulties and perplexities, I imagine there is much fun, much zest and enjoyment in a lawyer's life. It is win or lose, defeat or conquest, every time; always a species of intellectual battle, which cannot fail to give zest to any contest. An infinite number of witticisms and funny legal experiences might be given, but any one wanting more than these here given may easily get them in Marshall Brown's encyclopædic book, "Wit and Humour of Bench and Bar." I am also indebted to that interesting book "Collections and Recollections, by One who Has Kept a Diary," for a number of the stories in these chapters.

PART II

SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

"The best education in the world is that got by struggling to get a living."—*Wendell Phillips.*

CHAPTER XII

THE CONDUCT AND CONVERSATION OF A GENTLEMAN.—HOW TO BECOME A GOOD TALKER

> "Natural talk, like ploughing, should turn up a large surface of life, rather than dig mines into geological strata."—*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

Most people have heard of the famous South African financier and state-builder, Cecil Rhodes, who provided in his will for two scholarships at Oxford for each of the States and Territories of our American Union. It was a noble bequest, and has been nobly received; for these scholarships, which entitle one hundred American students to a three-year course at Oxford, one hundred every three years forever, must be of incalculable benefit to the individuals who enjoy them, and may be of great value to the nation to which they belong.

But what I wish to draw attention to is the *social* training which is obtained at Oxford, and which means, perhaps, even more than the *intellectual* training. Just listen to what Dr. William T. Harris, late United States Commissioner of Education, one of the ablest educators and administrators in this country, says of Oxford:

Oxford is the English school for gentlemen. A typical English gentleman is a peculiar product, somewhat different from the ideal gentleman of France or Germany, or of any other nation in Europe. An American would suppose, on first hearing of the English gentleman, that he must be a person very sensitive as to his caste—as to his wealth or nobility, his birth or official position—and continually making demands for recognition; and that in his ordinary actions he is likely to imply a consciousness of his superiority in wealth or birth or official station. No greater mistake could be made. Of all people in Europe the Englishman is the most apt to see that any such manifestation is vulgar, and any consciousness or self-assertion of caste is marked at once as a gross violation of the code of the gentleman. The English aristocracy of birth has an inimitable charm. It is impossible to storm its intrenchments, because it assumes nothing for itself. It has habituated itself to this repression of the vulgar desire to attract attention to its possessions, and made it second nature, so that it does not reveal any effort. . . . The ideal English gentleman never permits himself to think of his rank or station; he has acquired a sense of honour that excludes even the thought of it as something odious. Indeed, the English gentleman can be distinguished from the other Englishmen by the ease with which he bears this impersonality, this sincere humanity, the utter effacement of his own claims for special consideration.

This, then, is the atmosphere of Oxford; such are the unpretentious manners of the true gentleman; and to enforce the truth of his description, Dr. Harris

tells this interesting story: Two Americans were travelling north from Edinburgh in a railway carriage, when a plain-looking gentleman enters the same coupé with them; and, lighting a briar pipe, begins talking to them and another gentleman in an off-hand, easy way, on topics of the day. On stopping at a station on the way, where this plain gentleman alights, they perceive a fine equipage with lackeys and outriders waiting for him; and on inquiring who he is, they are told, "That is the Duke of Athol." "It was very kind of him," said the Americans to their travelling companion, "to talk so familiarly to two cads like us." To this the gentleman quietly assented. Then when this gentleman alighted, they found a similar equipage waiting for him. "Who is he?" they inquired of the conductor. "That is the Duke of Sutherland." "The deuce! And who are you?" exclaimed the astonished Americans!

Well, all this is high praise of the English gentleman; and from my own limited experience during the eighteen months I passed in England, I think it is pretty well founded.

But must a young American go to Oxford in order to become a perfect gentleman? Must he breathe that highly refined atmosphere to become perfect in manner and speech? Would not Yale or Harvard do as well? I never knew but one Englishman so thoroughly liberal and large-minded as some Americans I have known. But undoubtedly there are such. Of

course, our American Cambridge and Harvard are not so ancient, so thoroughly well founded in manners and speech, as those of England; but I am strongly inclined to think that for a young American, the training and the associations of our New England universities are better suited than those of old England.

Dr. Harris has in view the training of young Americans for ambassadorships and consulates and other government positions abroad, and thereby promoting amicable relations among all English-speaking people; and with this object in view, I have no doubt these Oxford scholarships are just the proper thing. So, dismissing this view of the case for the present, let us consider the subject from a broader standpoint.

What is a perfect gentleman? And who is a perfect gentleman? Here is an Englishman, Dean Swift—he never would allow any man to call him an Irishman—who has given the best definition of the conduct and conversation of a gentleman which I have ever seen. "Good manners," says he, "is the art of making other people at ease with whom we converse; and he who makes the fewest people uneasy is the best-bred man in the company."

An excellent observation; but can this quality be acquired? Or is it a native, inborn quality? Must we go to Oxford or to Cambridge for it? Is it born in universities only? I think not. Some men come into the world with it—"built that way"—just as others are born with "a silver spoon in their mouths."

Lord Holland used to come down to breakfast looking like a man who had just received a piece of great good news; while Thomas Carlyle came down looking as if he had had an encounter with the devil, who had thrown him. These men were "built that way," and could hardly act in any other. You feel at ease the moment you catch the eye of some persons, while you feel uncomfortable the instant you see the face of others. But can this good quality be acquired by those who have not inherited it? That is the question. You see that Dr. Harris thinks that three years at Oxford may give one some tinge of it—a confession that it may be acquired. It is an enviable, a noble quality, one that makes friends of all the world, and inevitably leads to success in any career; and I propose to show how it may, by young people at least, be acquired without going to Oxford for it.

Suppose a young man—one, let us say, with at least a common-school and high-school education—who wishes to become possessed of this quality, makes a practice of entering the best society he can find—suppose he makes a point of talking with well-mannered, educated people, at home and abroad, wherever he meets them; observes their manners, studies their character, and marks their style of talking—suppose he becomes familiar with the best books in biography, history, fiction, and general literature, especially with Shakespeare, Molière, and Walter Scott—suppose he becomes a debater and fluent speaker, not to say an

orator, in literary and other circles—makes a point of becoming acquainted with every good writer or speaker, every well-informed person within his reach, not despising the common people, but valuing knowledge, good manners, and talent wherever he finds them—suppose he becomes a club man or society man (not necessarily Society with a big S), and learns the habits and manners of good society (not forgetting to notice the bad in order to avoid it)—suppose he makes it a prime article of his daily practice to please people and make them feel comfortable wherever he meets them—and, above all, suppose he makes it his chief care to make friends among the best and best-educated women he can find—then I maintain that this young man, whatever qualities he may be born with, may acquire the admirable and enviable quality we are speaking of, and that the power of putting people at ease in conversation will become so natural to him that he cannot do otherwise. This above all, not only "to thine own self be true," but especially to every woman; for the conduct of a man toward women is the prime mark of gentlemanliness, or of the reverse. Court, therefore, the society of well-bred and well-informed women; for they are the best educators in gentlemanliness and good breeding. "A good woman," said Lowell to young Dean Howells, in conversation, "is the best thing in the world, and a man is always the better for honouring women."

Now, if a man should do all this while still young—

and by young I mean one who is still learning and desirous to learn—why should he not, even if born in a hovel, become a perfect gentleman? Why should he not become a charming and entertaining companion, a pleasing and interesting talker, a suave and engaging gentleman that puts every one whom he meets at his ease, and makes friends of all with whom he talks? Henry Clay was such a man, and we know how scanty his education was. He never was at Oxford or Cambridge, either in new or in old England; but he studied and observed men as I have indicated; and he so schooled himself that he was at ease with all the world, with men of all ranks, and all the world was at ease with him. And I am sure that the poor printer-boy, Benjamin Franklin, who afterwards became ambassador to France, and made all France in love with him, had schooled himself in a similar way.

Remember, there is a contagion in this thing; for, as I have already indicated, one is immediately influenced by the look or manner of the person one meets; his form and feature announce his character; and what makes one feel uneasy is often a consciousness that the "other fellow" is uneasy. For the look or manner of a person often speaks much faster and more significantly than his words. Like the mountain echo, which answers good or bad according as it is spoken to, most people answer as they are addressed. Great men have this contagious power in a high de-

gree. "No man," said a soldier of his time, "ever entered Pitt's (Chatham's) closet without feeling himself a braver man when he came out." But all men have this power in some degree. Lowell felt this so strongly that he gave eloquent utterance to it:

> Be noble, and the nobleness that lies
> In other men, sleeping, though not dead,
> Will rise in majesty to meet thine own.

Furthermore, you must make a practice of drawing people out, especially the timid ones; and never give occasion for those "awkward pauses" which are so embarrassing in conversation. You must let others talk more than yourself, if they feel so inclined, and speak only when they are silent.

The English say "it needs three generations to make a gentleman." Perhaps it does among them; there are such awfully ungentle as well as gentle folks among them; but it sometimes happens that the man of the first generation is the finest gentleman of the three. Wherein was the son of Count Egmont or the son of Lord Chesterfield like his father? or the son of Edmund Burke? or the son of John Howard? What a frightful monster was Commodus, the son of that fine gentleman, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius? And what murderous wretches the sons of Constantine the Great were! So much depends on the native character of the man himself, on his will, energy, and industry, that heredity does not always count. If fine example

plays unconsciously such an important part in the moulding of a man, why may not such example, consciously observed and admired, have a still deeper influence? Why may we not consciously observe and practise good manners so as to make them "second nature"? When told that "habit was second nature," "Second nature!" said the Duke of Wellington, "twenty times second nature!"

The common people among the English are noted for shyness and awkwardness in the presence of rank and wealth; they are embarrassed by over-due respect for those above them in the social scale. Americans, from the nature of their social and political institutions, which recognise the equality of all men, are generally free from this slavish feeling. What have we to do with titles or ancestry, with the forefathers or foremothers of any man? Wherein is the man himself entitled to special respect or disrespect because of the virtue of his father or grandfather? Nothing but native merit or high character, uncommon talent or heroic achievement, on the part of the man himself, is or should be reverenced by us. Only a slave or a savage worships the accidental distinction of birth. "Some men," says Sydney Smith, "are like growing potatoes: the best part of them is underground."

It is said that King Edward VII., when Prince of Wales, was never more charmed with the conversation of any person than with that of a well-bred young

American lady, who spoke to him as she would have spoken to any other well-bred gentleman, with perfect frankness and freedom, and quite as much at her ease as if she were talking to her equal. And was she not his equal, in the proper sense of the word? His Royal Highness was well-born and well-bred; so was she. And with her he enjoyed a draught of the freedom of American air, which, in the social sense, was quite new and refreshing to him; so that the Prince was charmed with the conversation of the American lady. An English lady would have shown such marked deference to his Royal Highness, such studied care of every word she uttered, that freedom and ease in conversation, spontaneity of thought and expression, would have been out of the question. The fetters of caste and etiquette would have paralysed her tongue and cowed her spirit, so that she could neither speak nor think freely in his presence.

I think that this quality of being at ease and putting others at ease in conversation is something like the attainment of ease in public speaking. At first the young orator is shy and embarrassed, timid and overanxious in the presence of an audience; but gradually, by practice and experience, he comes to see and feel that an audience is simply a collection of individuals, with any one of whom he could, separately, talk with perfect ease; and why should he not do the same when they are all together? So he finally talks to an audience with the same unconscious ease with

which he talks to individuals. It is the old story: practice makes perfect; and any intelligent man may become a master in this art, as in the other, if he will only take the trouble to do so.

How quick, alert, and ready of speech the city boy is as compared with the country boy! What makes the difference? Practice—daily, hourly practice among his fellows. Yet, though the country boy has often only fields and flowers and dumb animals to commune with, he has other advantages which more than counterbalance those of the city boy—he has time for observation, thought, study, expansion; he has the best chance for physical and intellectual growth; he grows naturally into a strong, vigorous manhood. Observe that nearly all our greatest men were born and bred in the country; but it was in the city where their powers bloomed and blossomed and bore fruit. They had acquired such a strong constitution that they soon outran their city competitors.

There are many examples to show that this enviable quality we are speaking of may be acquired. The finest gentleman and most charming converser of his day, Chesterfield, confesses that in his youth he was so reserved and shy that he dreaded nothing more than entering a drawing-room full of society people, and here he remained dumb for a long time; until finally he summoned up courage enough to say to one of the ladies: "It is a fine day, madam." "Yes, indeed, it is," she replied and went on conversing with him until she

made him forget himself and talk very pleasantly. Such was the beginning of the man who became "the most polished gentleman in England."

Sydney Smith, the most genial talker and witty diner-out of his time, was so shy and self-conscious in his early years, that he used to crumble his bread at dinner-parties ("with both hands if a Bishop were in the company"), and feel so intolerably uncomfortable that he wished himself invisible; but, as he himself tells us, he soon discovered that "all the world was not thinking of him," and so he overcame the foolish feeling. So it was with many others. Like the stage-fright of the young actor or actress, it is overcome by repeated attempts to succeed. Even Charles Lamb, one of the most pleasant companions and bright, cheerful talkers of his time, was exceedingly timid and diffident in early manhood; and yet he attained such ease and self-possession, such a talent for putting people at ease and "setting the table in a roar," that, notwithstanding his stutter, he became a charming talker. All who knew him loved him, and spoke of him as "the gentle Charles," whose talk, with all its quips and quiddities, was the most pleasant they had ever known.

CHAPTER XIII

VARIOUS KINDS OF TALKERS.—CITY AND COUNTRY PEOPLE

> "The world's a theatre; the earth a stage,
> Which God and Nature do with actors fill."
>
> —*Apology for Actors.*

SOLITARY employment in the fields, with no living companions but cattle and creeping things, is not favourable to the development of conversational powers. "Nature's journeymen," the tillers of the soil, are not noted for their fluency in talk. I cannot help thinking that Peacock's descriptions of the range of a country gentleman's ideas as "nearly commensurate with that of the great King Nebuchadnezzar when he was turned out to grass" is a capital hit. But, of course, there are country gentlemen and country gentlemen, and many of them are far superior to city gentlemen.

When Sydney Smith, a wit, diner-out, and popular preacher, was "suddenly caught up and transported by the Archbishop of York" to a living in a village of Yorkshire, where there had not been a resident clergyman for one hundred and fifty years, he found "ample occupation to be the true secret of happiness;" and after describing his many occupations as village pastor, village magistrate, village doctor,

apothecary, schoolmaster, farmer, and Edinburgh reviewer, he winds up with the declaration that "if, with a pleasant wife, three children, and many friends who wish me well, I cannot be happy, I am a silly, foolish fellow, and what becomes of me is of no consequence." Yet he declares that he means to come to London once a year, though of such London visits he says he will doubtless "soon be weary, finding my mind growing weaker and weaker, and my acquaintances gradually falling off." So that Sydney Smith showed that an intellectual man, even a wit and diner-out, can, if he be anxious to do good and to be of service to his fellow-men, be happy in the country.

Coleridge tells a good story of a silent rustic to whom he talked eloquently for half an hour or more. As the countryman listened and held his tongue, the poet thought him a wise man, who knew good talk when he heard it; for Coleridge loved a good listener, who would let him talk without interruption. So, as the countryman never opened his mouth, but merely nodded and smiled, the great talker thought much of him, and set forth his views in all their fulness. Arriving at an inn, they both sat down to dinner, Coleridge talking all the time in his best style. At last, when dumplings came upon the table, his appreciative listener broke silence, and exclaimed in great glee:

"Aha! them's the jockeys for me!"

The old man eloquent suddenly awoke as if from a

dream, and taking up his hat, departed in silence, forming doubtless new reflections on the ancient proverb, "Speech is silver, but silence is gold." Did not Solomon say, long ago, "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise"?

Max Müller declares that there are peasants in England who seldom use more than four or five hundred words. Their ideas are probably even more limited than their words. When Thoreau asked his solitary wood-chopper friend, whom he had not seen for four or five months, whether he had not got a new idea since he had last seen him, "Good Lord!" said he, "a man who works as hard as I do, if he does not forget the ideas he has had, will do well!" This was probably the most brilliant remark he had ever made, and it is perhaps no less true than clever.

To poets and painters (who, by the way, generally live in cities), communion with Nature may be inspiring; but she seems little inspiring to the children of the soil, who have seldom much to say of her.

Dr. Mahaffy fared better with country people than either Coleridge or Thoreau. "I remember," says he, "seeing a stupid young man probed by an intelligent person, till it accidentally came out that he knew all about the wild cattle in Lord Tankerville's park, when from that moment he took the lead in the conversation, and excited a most interesting discussion, in which several very dull country farmers took an animated part." That "intelligent person" was probably

the doctor himself, who had a skilful way of drawing people out.

Want of society and social recreation is depressing. Insanity is said to be more common among country people than among those of the city. I have read somewhere of a Western settler's wife, who declared she "could stand the attacks of Indians and wild beasts, the terrors of rattlesnakes and the brutality of a drunken husband; but the awful and everlasting silence and solitude of the prairie were more than she could endure."

It is good to be alone, or to be alone with Nature, at times; but we must not have too much of this rural solitude. City people, being at the centre of intelligence, have always some new thing to talk about, which keeps them alert and alive; while country people, living where nothing changes except the weather and the crops, go through the same old routine every day of the year, and have nothing new to think of. The Athenians, it will be remembered, spent their time "in nothing else but to hear or to tell some new thing." The ideal of a man of culture is to live part of the year in the city and part in the country—to have a town-house and a country-house. For an all-round development and a full enjoyment of life, this seems the best way of living; but not every man can command such a luxury. The English nobility are fortunate in this respect.

It is a queer thing this communing with Nature. The

vastness of landscape scenery, with boundless plains and limitless stretches of view, and the silence and lonesomeness all around, seem to have an annihilating effect on the mind of some men. It puts their thinking powers asleep. All is still, silent, speechless, and the observer sinks unconsciously into the same state. He thinks of nothing, does nothing, and lets everything have its way; and yet he may feel an inexpressible joy in it. But it is not the place for concentration of thought or for intellectual work. Most authors find that a spot within four walls is more favourable for composition than the open country. "I find my best working hours," said Emerson, "in some New York hotel or country inn, where no one knows or can find me. There one finds one's self." Buckle, who was an omnivorous reader and tireless worker, always found refreshment in good talk at his club, or in chess-playing; never in journeys to the country.

Although Lord Byron was passionately fond of Nature in all her forms and moods, and drew strength from her wherever he went, he took good care to get within four walls, and generally four narrow walls, whenever he began to compose. He said he could not compose in a large room; nor could he in the fields; nor anywhere else except when alone and undisturbed.

Sydney Smith said that "in the country he always feared creation would expire before tea-time!" and on another occasion he said that "country life was

very good—in fact the very best in the world—for cattle!"

"Lamb once came to see us," says Hazlitt; "where he was like 'the most capricious poet Ovid among the Goths.' The country people thought him an oddity, and did not understand his jokes. It would be strange if they did; for he did not make any remark worth noting while he stayed among them. But when he crossed the country to Oxford, then he talked a little; he and the old collegians were hail-fellows well met; and in the quadrangle he 'walked gowned.'"

Nor did Dr. Johnson or Madame de Staël care a pin for the country or the beauties of Nature. What they delighted in was good company, good conversation, and good dinners. Ruskin, on the other hand, loved Nature as well as art, could live in the country as well as in the city; and he advised a young friend "to rest in changed thoughts as much as possible; to get out on the green banks and brows and think of nothing but what the winds and waves say." Hobbes thought that with a good library at hand, he could work well and enjoy life in the country; but he found that "in the country, in long time, for want of good conversation, one's understanding and invention contract a moss upon them, like an old paling on an orchard," and he returned to the city.

So it seems that on the whole, for thinkers and literary workers, poets and artists, the city is the best place to think and work in, the country to rest and

relax in. In the country, all Nature seems to be constantly saying: "Go slow; take your time; be quiet; rest!"

In conversation, as in everything else, practice is the chief thing; and precisely as silence and solitude stiffen the tongue and rust the mind, so does intercourse with the world lubricate the tongue and polish the mind. Long disuse will make one forget even his mother tongue. It is one of the mistakes of Defoe that he makes Robinson Crusoe, after two or three years of solitude, not only remember his native tongue, but one or two foreign ones which he had learned in his youth. This is contrary to all experience. I have read of a man who, after long residence among the savages of Africa, was actually unable, on his return home, to understand his own mother!

Not only does want of use cause loss of power, but a loss of inclination to use what power one has. I knew a gentleman who, once quite a society man and good talker, became, from long home-keeping, quite averse to society, and disinclined to talk. He hated to be taken out of his den; found himself ill at ease in society; and cared for no companionship but his books. And I found, when I did get him out of his den, that his tongue had lost its cunning; for he talked awkwardly, and after the first flash or two subsided into silence. With all his book knowledge, he contrasted badly with the facile man of the world, who, accustomed to good society, chats in that light, airy way,

"from grave to gay, from lively to severe," which charms all listeners.

A teacher of ability once said to me: "I don't know how it is, but among the people I meet at public tables and summer resorts I am always outstripped, overshadowed, in conversation." The reason was plain. This man had spent most of his time in silent study and thought, while they had been practising conversation in business and in social life all their lives.

Not all well-informed, well-read, or bright-minded men are good talkers. Some from lack of repose, others from self-consciousness, still others from illogicalness, or, as Dr. Holmes terms it, "jerkiness," are unbearable. Dr. Holmes, on this point, says:

There are men whom it weakens one to talk with an hour more than a day's fasting would do. They are the talkers who have what might be called jerky minds. Their thoughts do not run in the natural order of sequence. They say bright things on all possible subjects; but their zig-zags rack you to death. After a jolting half hour with one of these jerky companions, talking with a dull friend affords great relief.

At the other extreme from the man with the jerky mind, but almost as wearisome, is the man of one idea or of one theme. Here is a good illustration of this from the *Little Chronicle:*

"Will you go over to call on Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson with me?" asked Mrs. Laird of her son Ned.

"Please excuse me, mother. I don't feel equal to hearing any more about Mexico to-day. I had as large a dose as I can digest at present when the Clarksons were here."

"Why, Ned!" remonstrated Mrs. Laird.

"Now, mother, you know yourself that Mr. Clarkson never talks about anything but Mexico. I am interested in Mexico, of course, but I must confess that it tires me to listen to a monologue on the subject every few days."

"I'll admit that my attention wanders at times when Mr. Clarkson gives us so many details of Mexican life," said Mrs. Laird. "But I realise that he is deeply interested in everything concerning that part of our continent, where he has lived and studied so many years, and I feel that it is only courteous to listen to him."

"Didn't it ever occur to you, mother, that it is scarcely courteous of him to assume that we are as deeply interested in his one topic of conversation as he is? It seems to me that if he were really polite, he would allow people to talk about something they were interested in, once in a while at least. You know that no subject is ever introduced that doesn't remind him of some Mexican phase of life, or some experience he has had there. The other day when you were trying to tell his wife about those poor people you are helping, he interrupted you to describe the condition of the poor in the City of Mexico. You never had a chance to finish your story, nor did Mrs. Clarkson have an opportunity to offer you any aid for your protégées. Do you know, mother, all I could think of at the time was a fish taking the bait and running away with it. You accidentally gave him a theme and he swam off

into a Mexican discourse that lasted the length of the call."

"Oh, Ned," laughed Mrs. Laird, "you are too severe upon him."

"Well, maybe I am, but I know one thing: that a person with a hobby shouldn't ride it too hard, if he wants to be an agreeable companion. Deliver me, I say, from the man with one idea."

Another wearisome talker is the self-conceited, pompous utterer of truisms. And the worst of it is that such a talker announces his self-evident remarks as if he were uttering new and oracular truths. Dr. Maginn tells a story of a Londoner of this sort, whom he hits off very nicely, although the poor fellow didn't see it. The doctor was sitting one day in a coffee-house in the Strand, when an elderly gentleman came in, sat down opposite him, bowed very politely to him, and then, putting on his spectacles and looking over the *Times*, in which he found a column of business failures, exclaimed, in a grave manner:

"Forty failures! Well, I have observed during my sixty years' experience that any man who lives beyond his income is sure to fail at last!"

"True, very true," said Maginn; "and I have noticed during my thirty years' experience that any man who walks out in the Strand on a rainy day without an umbrella is sure to get wet!"

"Most true," said the elderly gentleman, "most true; I like to listen to sensible conversation."

There are persons who think highly of the professed raconteur, or getter off of "good things"; but what he "gets off" is not really conversation at all, but a species of monologue. He does not care to exchange ideas with you: he has none to exchange; all he wants is to astonish you and please himself with his "good story." He is usually an egotist, who gets off his "good thing" more to show what a clever fellow he is than anything else. And then he is so long about it; he brings in every unnecessary little detail to heighten the effect; and his delight is to watch the effect of the explosion at the end. "'Take a seat,' said Jones to me," he begins, "as I entered the room with my cane in one hand and my hat in the other; 'take a seat; sit down; make yourself at home.' And he pushed a chair toward me, which I accepted, and sat down beside him. I sat in a large plush-covered chair; he in an old-fashioned arm-chair, with a high back. Crossing one leg over the other, and taking out his cigar-case, he handed it to me; I took one, and handed it back; and after I had lit my cigar, he seized the match I used, tried to light his cigar with it, but failed to do so; then, seizing another match, he struck it on the heel of his boot, and thus succeeded in lighting his cheroot. Then he stretched himself out in his chair; looked bland and complacent; put his foot on the back of a chair, pulled out his handkerchief, wiped his forehead, blew his nose, and puffed away at his cigar; then he continued to remark in a drawling tone: 'It is quite

warm to-day; quite warm indeed; and that cold wave has not come yet; well I suppose it never will come; but we shall welcome it when it does come, won't we, eh? Well, as I was saying," etc., etc.

And so he goes on for ten mortal minutes with his little nothings, just like the tiresome novel writers, before he comes to the point. What are the chairs and the cigars and the matches and the nose-blowing and the weather to me? He thinks he is, like a painter, giving a graphic picture of a wonderful scene, and exhibiting the skill of an artist. I have sometimes got so provoked with these long-winded palaverers that I have cried out with impatience, "Pray, sir, drop the accessories, and tell me plainly what Jones said to you!" But that was the end of the "good thing" to me.

De Quincey thus sharply describes the raconteur:

> Of all the bores whom man in his folly hesitates to hang, and whom Heaven in its mysterious wisdom suffers to propagate their species, the most insufferable is the teller of "good stories"—a nuisance that should be put down by cudgelling, by submersion in horseponds, or by any mode of abatement, as summarily as men would combine to suffocate a vampire or a mad dog.

De Quincey may have had in mind in this strong denunciation of the teller of "good stories" the man who delights in the narration of vicious or wicked stories, a person who should be despised by all men of culture.

I shall never forget what old Dr. Ryland said to young John Jay: "In my youth," said he, "my imagination was corrupted in conversation by evil images, and I shall never get them out of my head until I am under the sod."

The professed raconteur and the professed jester are birds of a feather; they should be shut up in a cage together. Somebody has well said, "It is good to jest even in trade, but not to make a trade of jesting." But if the jester does not make a trade of jesting, his occupation is gone. He must even in the very presence of death shake his cap and bells, and, like Gay, perpetrate an irreverent jest even on his tombstone:

> Life is a jest, and all things show it:
> I thought so once, and now I know it.

Lastly there are taciturn men whom it is impossible to draw into conversation by any device whatever. Sir Walter Scott tells a good story of his friend William Clerk, who was an excellent talker, and whose portrait Sir Walter drew in the character of Darsie Latimer in "Red Gauntlet." Clerk had been talking to a stranger in a stage-coach, and had expressed his thoughts to him in his usual full and fluent manner, without eliciting anything from his listener. At last Clerk thus addressed him:

"Now, my friend, I have talked to you on all ordinary subjects — literature, farming, merchandise, gaming, game-laws, horse-races, suits-at-law, politics,

swindling, blasphemy, and philosophy—is there any one subject that you will favour me by opening upon?"

"Sir," replied the inscrutable stranger, "can you say anything clever about bend-leather?"

CHAPTER XIV

SOME PROFITABLE TALKERS.—INFLUENCE OF WOMEN

"Das Ewig-Weibliche zicht uns hinan."

—*Goethe.*

One who has some acquaintance with artists, inventors, or connoisseurs in any art need not be a great reader in order to be a well-informed man; he may, on special subjects, learn more from their conversation than he can from a hundred books; and though his knowledge may not be so exact, it will probably be more completely assimilated, more practical and more thoroughly his own than that of the reading man. For he who acquires knowledge in this way assists in the making of it; he causes it to spring from suggestion and remark, from occasion and circumstance, and participates in the production of it. Nor need it be at all a one-sided affair; for a good listener or questioner is often quite as useful to the talker as to the hearer—he brings out the talker and causes him to grow and expand in his views and ideas. And this does as much good to the talker as to his hearer. Then, when one wishes to get further or more exact information on the subject talked of, this is the time to consult books and fortify one's knowledge.

I knew a gentleman, a leader-writer on a metropolitan newspaper, who used to make a practice of inviting to his table every Sunday some gentleman of special acquirements or peculiar experiences, some scientist or traveller, explorer or litterateur, artist or manufacturer, from whose conversation he learned more in one hour than he could in many hours' reading. Besides, the knowledge of these men was up to date, and they knew the latest thing in their peculiar art or profession. My friend valued their conversation not only for what they told him, but also for what they suggested; they stirred his own mind to thought, and thus gave him new subjects to think on and to write on; they supplied him with food for his brain and material for his pen.

Nor was there anything wrong or selfish in this; for he was himself a brilliant talker, full of new and striking thoughts; fiery and furious in his denunciation of shams and humbugs, and full of anecdote and story concerning the men and women whom he had known. So that he furnished his guests with quite as much, or rather with much more, knowledge than he received from any of them. He inspired his guests to talk by his example; and they inspired him with new thoughts by what they said. Especially was this the case when the table was cleared and coffee and cigars were produced; then each one found his tongue and talked freely and frankly; the spirit of wit and humour came into play, and each gave free vent to every fancy or

thought that occurred to him. Here, too, was character displayed, aims and motives freely avowed, and the whole soul laid bare, much to the amusement or edification of all the others.

Many are the advantages of wealth, especially to him who knows how to use it; and this last, wining and dining whom you please, is one of them. Another is that of being able to keep a good secretary, one capable of reading to you, and giving you in conversation a good summary or digest of the things you want to know; of the newest books, of what is going on in the world, and so on. To have such a man at your elbow, to whom you can say at any moment, "Read that book, and tell me what is in it;" or, "Look over the monthly magazines, and tell me what they contain this month;" or, "What has the *Times* or the *Tribune* to say this morning?" or "What news from Japan or South Africa?"—this, I say, is a princely privilege. It is the only "royal road to knowledge" that I know of; for he who can command it is a king among men. It gives him two or three pair of eyes, two or three pair of hands, and forty years more of life; in fact, it enables him to live two or three ordinary lives. What a saving of mind, memory and eyesight, too, in being thus relieved of all the chaff and dust of literature, and served only with the wheat! Was it not thus that those giant-working statesmen, Cavour, Palmerston, Gladstone and Bismarck, got through so much work and acquired such intimate knowledge of what

was going on in the world? Palmerston declared at a public dinner, "I never read any printed book." He learned everything from the debates, documents and conversations of the men he knew. The great Napoleon kept three secretaries constantly at work. These great men had the art of learning everything from those they talked with.

It is said that if a man makes one real friend in a lifetime he is fortunate. Probably he is; and if that friend be a woman, a noble, high-minded, intelligent woman, he is doubly fortunate; for the benefits he may derive from her will be not only material but intellectual; not only physical but spiritual; not only elevating but ennobling; not only polishing but perfecting. Lowell speaks of "God's noblest work—a perfect woman;" and the perfecter of man is woman. "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect," is Christ's command. All noble men have loved and esteemed women. Bad men don't; they corrupt and degrade them. The whole life of a man depends upon what kind of a wife he gets; for she will either make or mar him. Of that you may be sure. If she have a noble nature, she will ennoble him; but if not, she will degrade him. Remember Walter Bagehot's wise and witty saying: "A man's mother may be his misfortune; but his wife is his fault."

Nothing cultivates, refines, ennobles like the conversation of an accomplished, high-minded woman. No man, however extensive his knowledge, will ever, with-

out considerable intercourse with well-bred women, become an accomplished or pleasing talker; for without this polishing, inspiring influence he will always retain something of the original barbarian about him. "If you would know what is proper or becoming," says Goethe, "you must converse with noble women." Nor is it at all necessary that such a woman should be literary or bookish. Remember Shakespeare's women.

Something of woman's lightness and delicacy of touch, of her quickness of perception and gentleness of manner, is necessary to every man who wishes to succeed in social or business life. Women generally have far more tact, patience, and perception than men, and in social affairs their instincts are unerring. I remember reading of a gentleman in straitened circumstances who, on taking leave of a young lady, said he was going by the round-the-lake way. "Oh," said she, "perhaps you haven't change for the ferry; let me supply you till you return." Few men could have acted so skilfully in such a delicate case. Remember the French saying, "Les femmes devinent tout."

Miss Charlotte Cushman, the famous actress, thus describes an interview with an accomplished woman, of whom and of her husband much has been written of late: "On Sunday who should come, self-invited, to meet me but Mrs. Thomas Carlyle! She came at one o'clock and stayed until eight. And such a day I have not hitherto known! Clever, witty, calm, cool, unsmiling, unsparing, a raconteur unparalleled, a

manner inimitable, a behaviour scrupulous, and a power invincible—a combination rare and strange exists in that plain yet keen, attractive unescapable woman! Oh, I must tell you of that day, for I cannot write it! After we left, of course we talked about her until the small hours of the morning."

And then, when Miss Cushman afterward saw her at her own house, and heard the majestic utterances of her gifted husband, she describes Mrs. Carlyle as "quiet and silent, assiduously renewing his cup of tea, or by an occasional nod or judicious note, struck just at the right moment, keeping the giant going, as if she wielded his mighty imagination at her pleasure, and evoked the thunder and the sunshine at her will." For a woman who was herself a brilliant talker, full of knowledge of the world, of quaint wit and true wisdom, this self-abnegation is truly admirable. Thomas Carlyle was nothing until he married her, and did nothing after he lost her.

How much the poets are indebted to women for their inspiration! How much Dante owed to Beatrice, Petrarch to Laura, Burns to his Highland Mary, Goethe to Frau von Stein, Cowper to Lady Austin! How much John Stuart Mill owed to Mrs. Taylor, Chateaubriand to Madame Récamier, and a host of writers to Madame de Staël! Who can tell how much these men of genius were influenced by such admirable women! Mill married the woman he admired as soon as he could do so, lived in an elysium with her for many

years, and then worshipped her as a saint after her death. The one bright spot in Lessing's hard life was his happy union with the woman whose conversation was his greatest source of comfort and inspiration; the years he lived with her were almost the only happy years of his life, and the year after her death the most unhappy. What chivalric devotion Steele paid to his charming Prue, and what delightful letters she inspired him to write! But for her he would have been much less of a man than he was. Never were the estimable qualities of women more highly prized than they were by Richard Steele, whose declaration that "to have known Lady Hastings was a liberal education" is one of the finest compliments ever paid to a woman. Shakespeare has given us many lovely women, and said many admirable things about them; but he has said nothing that surpasses this. Let me quote one passage, however, which must have delighted Steele, if he ever saw it:

> From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
> They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;
> They are the books, the arts, the academes,
> That show, contain, and nourish all the world;
> Else none at all in aught proves excellent.

Shakespeare's heroines are among the most admirable women in literature. In fact, he has, as Ruskin says, hardly any heroes, only heroines; and when the men get tangled up in all sorts of difficulties, it is the women who show them the way out! "Who," says Dr.

John Lord, "that has written poetry that future ages will sing; who that has sculptured marble that seems to live; who that has declared the saving truths of an unfathomable religion—has not been stimulated to labour and duty by the women with whom he has lived in intimacy, with mutual admiration and respect!" The wise Socrates declared, more than 2,000 years ago, that "woman, once made equal with man, becomes his superior"; and I have repeatedly had occasion to see this in those cases where women, put into the places of men as principals of schools, have proved themselves in every way far superior to men.*

*I would earnestly recommend to any young man who wishes to make the acquaintance of noble women and make the most of life, to read Mrs. Jameson's "Characteristics of Shakespeare's Women," and then read the plays in which they appear. This reading will not only enlighten and ennoble his mind and heart, but enrich his knowledge of good language and good manners. "Shakespeare," says Emerson, "was easily the first gentleman in England."

We know almost nothing of the life of Shakespeare, but surely he must have known many noble women to have portrayed so enchantingly such charming specimens of womankind. So with Scott and Dickens and Thackeray. And what a crowd of poets have been inspired and animated during their whole lives by their love of women! There's Dante, whose love of Beatrice, a lovely young gentlewoman who died early, left such a profound and ineradicable impression on him that he resolved to devote his whole great poem to her memory; there's Tasso, whose love of Leonora d'Este was his chief inspiration in writing his great epic, "Jerusalem Delivered"; there's Surrey, that chivalrous and noble young English poet, the first to write English verse in the iambic measure, whose

How a woman may charm even her own sex in conversation is shown in the following story, which I read forty years ago in the old *Saturday Evening Post*, a story which I have never forgotten:

"I met in my mountain home," says Miss H. E. Sears, "a character, not a mere singularity or a passing nonentity, moulded of common clay; but a character, resembling rather enduring marble, carved by noble artistic power; or, I should say, built up of precious stones into an edifice of surpassing loveliness. Do you think it was an heiress or a princess? Or one who had enjoyed all the advantages of rank and fortune? Oh, no; it was only an elderly lady from whom every vestige of youth and physical beauty had fled; but the light of her mild blue eye, which kindled as she spoke, showed that the internal and intellectual fires still burned brightly, and that notwithstanding her many years of toil, care, and trouble, she had learned, from the kings and prophets of literature, how to overcome them all, and still charm those whom she met.

"Conversation! How came she to be so fully mistress

love of the fair Geraldine inspired all his fine sonnets; there's Petrarch, whose whole poetic muse was inspired by his love of one noble lady, Laura, whom he loved "too well, but not wisely"; there's Burns and Coleridge and Byron and Shelley and Poe and Whittier, and a hundred others, many of whose most charming poems were inspired by their love and admiration of women. O woman! how much we owe to thee, and yet how ill thy love and care and self-sacrifice have often been rewarded! What desecration and sacrilege is committed by those greedy capitalists who ruin and murder thousands of them, even in childhood, in their abominable factories!

of the art, as though she had always moved in highly polished circles, and studied nothing else all her life? She had lived a very secluded life, being one of those who are stigmatised as 'old maids,' and having always been in moderate circumstances. Yet her silver tones fell upon the ear as a sort of enchantment; her voice, modulated to the extreme of culture, stopping short of affectation or a studied tone, was soft as the notes of a lute. 'It is the perfection of art to imitate nature;' but no; there can be no art here; it is only nature brought to its highest perfection. And then the thoughts in her conversation! How they welled up, clear and brilliant and sparkling, from the depths of an elegant and refined mind—what would not a fashionable belle give to be able to converse in that style! Simple, original, cheerful almost to gaiety, her ideas flowed out in freshness, fulness, and variety, entirely free from the trivialities and personalities which generally make up so large a share of what certain people call conversation. Her discourse transfigured her, until I thought that she looked like an angel discoursing of heavenly things, while sweet peace and content beamed from every feature.

"How did she acquire that large stock of ideas—that store of splendid thoughts? Whence did she acquire that rich, varied expression in which she clothed her thoughts? The gift of genius? No! The result of a noble culture? No! Culture! What opportunities had she had for culture? She told me herself she had received but little early education, and had been obliged to struggle with pecuniary difficulties all her life. A homestead was all her fortune; she had been actively employed all her life, and had had but small leisure for study;—but the cracks and crev-

ices of life she had filled with reading,—reading in our best English literature; poetry, history, travels, memoirs, essays, and the better works of fiction; and this it was which enabled her to talk so charmingly. Those unsightly seams and gaps which others leave unfilled, or else putty up with petty gossip or tales of intrigue and crime, she had filled up with knowledge from the 'wells of English undefiled,' affording a culture which grows and beautifies with time, forming part of that valuable superstructure which she had quietly and unambitiously reared, without being aware of its splendour or its value. And she loved to communicate what she had learned, and to inspire others with a love of the good literature she had studied.

"When I left that elderly woman, I felt ashamed that I had ever been despondent and disheartened because I had not genius or high talents to help me on in the world. I saw that industry and the proper use of time were the great things. Here was the true culture; it brought her not only a wide acquaintance with mankind and the world in general, but peace of mind, calm thoughts, and sweet content; it enabled her to live a healthy intellectual life, blended with useful labour and a world of silent, gentle affection, which constitutes the glory and perfection of true womanhood."

What a contrast such a woman is to those women of whom it is said: "They have a way of saying everything and telling nothing; of saying nothing and telling everything!" She had read for knowledge and culture, not for mere amusement. What many people fail to attain through schools and teachers she had

supplied through books; and her intellectual acquirements had given her a refined grace of manner, a speech and conversation, which would have made the charm of any society where literature and life were regarded with interest. Her education had been received in what Carlyle describes as the best university, "a collection of good books."

Is it not true that beauty lies in the mind, as reflected in speech, manner and feature? Is there any real beauty in a dull, ignorant woman, however great her physical charms? Such a woman soon tires and cloys; while the other remains "a joy forever." Michelet maintains that "a good wife is a fortune to a man, especially if she be poor;" and Richter declares that "no man can live innocent or die righteous without a wife."

CHAPTER XV

TALKS AT THE TWILIGHT CLUB

"An excellent and well-arranged dinner is the culminating point of all civilisation."—*Chatfield.*

No talent is more admirable than that of the man who knows how to touch those hidden springs which set quiet and undemonstrative people a-talking—those taciturn people who never speak except when they are spoken to or have something worth telling. There are always subjects about which such people can talk most interestingly if they can only be induced to speak.

He who has the power of drawing people out, who has that confiding, amiable, and pleasing manner which dispels reserve and self-consciousness, which puts people at ease and inspires them with speech and a willingness to talk, has a master talent, which is as rare as it is valuable. In whatever company such a man appears, his presence acts like sunshine on plants; every one finds himself expanding with new life, and ready to exhibit whatever element of beauty or refinement there is in him. Touching their minds in that light, airy, quickening way which stirs thought and recollection, he dispels reserve and inspires confidence; and thus he causes the company to vie with each other

in telling things that are amusing or instructive, or that elucidate whatever subject is discussed.

I have seen many diffident and taciturn people warmed into life under the spell of such an enchanter; seen them pour out their thoughts or tell their story in a free and off-hand manner before a numerous company; turning themselves inside out, in fact, for the benefit of the company. In short, this magical mover of souls brings about that fine reciprocity of ideas which is the charm of true conversation—a reciprocity by which all are enriched and none impoverished, and by which each receives more than he gives; for each one receives for his single experience that of all the others, and thus obtains a mental and spiritual refreshment which cannot be found in any other way.

The most skilful man of this kind I ever knew is Mr. Charles F. Wingate, the Secretary of the New York Twilight Club and author of "What Shall Our Boys do for a Living?" Never have I known a man who can so readily set people a-talking on some subject which he himself has started. Not only does he lead them to bring forth the best that is in them, but he causes them to tell it well and easily, to speak with interest and effect. "Er geht mit dem guten Beispiel voran," as the Germans say, and his hearers seem to catch something of his manner and spirit from listening to his talk.

It is well known that some men need only the occasion or the opportunity in order to display qualities

or powers unknown even to themselves and unsuspected by their friends, and it is Wingate's delight to afford such an occasion and induce them to unfold themselves. Well aware of the fact that no man knows precisely how much he does know until he begins to tell it, and, moreover, that the great art consists in showing men how to tell what they do know, how to put their experiences into words, and render it interesting to others, he shows how this is done by example.

Most men, even those well informed, think little of what they have learned, and much of what they have still to learn; the field of knowledge constantly widens before them, while that which they have gone through seems comparatively limited; but it is by showing what they know that they learn more, and gain distinctness and clearness in the knowledge they have. And sometimes a plain man condenses a whole life experience in a few spoken sentences.

At the Twilight Club, whose meetings are always accompanied by a dinner, where free talk goes on before the set-talks or the speech-making begins, Mr. Wingate will go around among the members, while they are dining and conversing, and to one he will say, in his quiet, winning way: "Look here, Jones, you can tell us something of this subject from your experience in the army—tell us that story of General Early at Winchester which you told me so nicely the other day; you can do that first rate"; to another he will

say, "You, Dan Beard, can tell us all about that curious circumstance that made you an artist, which will be just the thing to illustrate the subject for to-night"; and to another, "You can tell us finely, Mr. Quill, how editors are made, and what kind of writing is most acceptable among the editors to-day," and so on. And then he begins himself, in a familiar, easy, conversational way, to show how such things may be told.

Henry Thomas Buckle says that "men and women range themselves into three classes or orders of intelligence. You can tell the lowest class by their habit of always talking about persons; the next by the fact that their habit is always to converse about things; the highest by their preference for the discussion of ideas." The talks at the Twilight Club were usually of things or events illustrating ideas. Even when things or persons were the subject, ideas rather than either things or persons were meant to be illustrated.

The first talk I heard at the Twilight Club was on the subject "How I Earned my First Dollar;" and I never listened to anything so amusing, refreshing, and delightful in my life. Laugh? Why, I never before had laughed so heartily or had learned so much in one evening. The stories told were full of wit and humour, generally winding up with a bit of a moral —the later acquired wisdom of the speakers—which clinched the story.

Among the practiced speakers everything is said in an easy, off-hand way; for in this club there are no

set speeches, no special preparations, no notes, no essays, no yarns. No one argues or dogmatises or tries to make converts; no one declaims or puts forth propositions which he challenges the others to deny; each gives his thought, his experience, or his reflection for what it is worth; simply telling in plain language what he has learned or thought in the course of his experience, without insisting on its absolute infallibleness or correctness. Thus every member finds in the remarks of the others a profitable exchange for his own, some food for thought, and a pleasing refreshment of mind which no argumentation or disputation could afford.

What is the Twilight Club? Of whom is it composed and where does it meet? It is a club of gentlemen of nearly every profession, especially lawyers, writers, teachers, clergymen, physicians, actors, artists and merchants; men of culture, who love to exchange ideas with each other, and capable of giving a reason for the faith that is in them. The club meets once a fortnight, at six P.M. sharp, at the St. Denis, New York, or at some other hotel, where a good table is spread, in large, spacious, and well-lighted rooms, and where each member comes from business, just as he is, to enjoy the social meal, the gathering, the table-talk and the after-dinner speeches. It is the freest, easiest and least expensive club I know. The dinner costs a dollar or a dollar and a half, and there are no other expenses (no assessments, fines, dues, etc.), except three dollars a

year for the printing and posting of the fortnightly bulletins, which give a short summary of what was said at the previous meeting and announce the time and subject of the next. But alas! Wingate is absent, and there is no one to replace him.

The formation of the club, in 1882, was suggested by the remark of Herbert Spencer, at a dinner given to him at Delmonico's by his American admirers, that "we have had somewhat too much of the gospel of work in this country, and need now to substitute the gospel of relaxation." Half a dozen journalists, who used to dine together in a down-town restaurant, whose talks were so pleasant they wished to make a regular thing of them, caught at this remark of Spencer's and made it their motto. Most of the members are men who have attained some degree of eminence in their profession, or who have undergone some uncommon experience, or won distinction in some honourable way. They are of all creeds and opinions, men sufficiently liberal to tolerate the views of others, and sufficiently able to give a reason for their own. Two or three times a year there is a lady's night, at which we sometimes hear a woman's view of the question discussed.

I shall never forget the night on which Mrs. Ballington Booth told us all about the Salvation Army and its admirable work—I think she converted every man present that night, most of whom had till then been sceptical about the work of the army.

There are now some eight or nine hundred members, although there are seldom above ninety or a hundred at one dinner; and several offshoots of the club have sprung up in other parts of the country, notably the Sunset Club in Chicago and the Six o'Clock Club in Washington. But the Twilight meets no more.

"The fault," says Mr. G. W. Curtis, speaking of the club of learned and literary men which met at Emerson's home, and failed after three meetings, "was its too great concentration. It was not a relaxation, as a club should be, but a tension. Society is a game, a play, a tournament, not a battle. It is the easy grace of undress; not an intellectual full-dress parade." That is why the Twilight was so successful. It had the easy grace of undress.

At the first dinner at which I was present, Mr. John Foord presided—there is, by the way, a different presiding officer at every meeting—and the brilliant flashes of wit and humour, the bonmots and repartees that shone forth on that occasion made it a memorable night for me. It was the first time I had ever heard real American after-dinner speaking, and I now understood why Americans are famous in this art. A gentleman who had taken a fancy to my "Life of Cobbett" had invited me there (by the way, this is one of the best things an author's works bring him; he makes friends by them); and I never enjoyed anything so much in my life. I had heard nothing like it in France or Germany, and only once in England,

at the Fleet Street Public House discussion. But that was heavy in comparison.

Well, Mr. Foord (formerly editor of the New York *Times* and of the Brooklyn *Union* and afterward of *Harper's Weekly*), who is a Scotchman, presented a living refutation of Sydney Smith's famous saying, concerning the "surgical operation necessary to get a joke into a Scotchman's head"; for he was, like Falstaff, not only witty himself, but the cause of wit in others; not only quick to catch any scintillation of wit or humour in another, but always ready and able to fan it into a flame. In short, I learned more and heard more bright things in this club that night than I had heard at any other assembly in my life. But to reproduce these things is almost like trying to paint the rainbow; the colours fade and disappear while the artist is arranging his brushes; so evanescent, though sparkling, is their nature.

I have never seen and never attempted any extended report of the talks at this club; but I have often thought that a Boswell might have made a good thing of them.

Nevertheless, although I know that such things will appear tame and dull in print as compared with the force and snap they have when spoken, I shall attempt to give from memory a few specimens of the wit and wisdom of the Twilight Club.

One evening, when the subject was "What do you believe?" the chairman called on Joel Benton, the

poet laureate of the club, for a statement of the faith that was in him, announcing at the same time that Mr. Benton had written a "Life of P. T. Barnum" in fifteen days. The poet expressed with emphasis the opinion that it mattered little what a man believed; that the question by which he should be judged, here and hereafter, would be, whether he *did right*. Mr. Benton was followed by Robert W. Taylor, now member of Congress from Ohio, who, questioning the soundness of Benton's philosophy, gave it as his opinion that Benton merited salvation neither here nor hereafter, because he *did write* the "Life of P. T. Barnum" in fifteen days! Of course this pun had to be *heard* to be fully appreciated.

At a dinner given by the club to Paul Blouet (who wrote under the nom de plume of Max O'Rell), Mr. George Harrison McAdam, then a member of the New York Legislature, was introduced to the assemblage as the only politician who was a member of the club. Mr. Wingate, in his suggestive way, asked Mr. McAdam to elucidate American politics for the benefit of the witty Frenchman. Mr. McAdam promptly complied, and in a humorous and slightly sarcastic vein said that nationalities in American politics, so far as New York City was concerned, were curiously mixed. Speaking practically, there were but two nationalities recognised, the Irish and the Germans. Not only were there no Frenchmen in American politics, but there were no Simon-pure Americans either.

The native Americans were too busy making money and too haughty to bother with politics, and left its pursuit in the main to the foreign-born element. Paradoxically, the more intelligent classes, in the sense of the better educated and wealthier classes, were the less intelligent, politically speaking. You could not convince a native-born American that any English-speaking foreigner was not an Irishman, nor that those not speaking English were not all Germans. The result was that the few Frenchmen in American politics were considered Germans, despite the Franco-Prussian War; and that he himself, although a Scotchman by descent, was in politics an Irishman.

In the same discussion, one of the speakers said that Republicans could be distinguished from Democrats by the location of the "Van" in their names; those having the "Van" at the beginning, the Van-derbilts, the Van-rensselaers, etc., were Republicans, while those having the "Van" at the end, were Democrats, instancing the Sulli-vans, the Dono-vans, etc.!

"Are not the Sullivans and Donovans the vanguard of Tammany Hall?" cried one.

"Oh, no; there is Van Wyck, for instance."

"Oh, but he is quite vanquished!"

"Vanished, you mean!"

"Come, come; no more of such Vanity," said the chairman.

After a sea-story by Captain Codman, who was a great sailor and a free-trader, another member, a

broker, said he was not surprised that the gallant captain loved the sea, and Newfoundland, and all about it, for you know he *is* a *man* who has something of the *cod* about him!

"That reminds me of a story," cried the Captain, who was somewhat nettled by this bad pun. "May I tell it, Mr. Chairman?"

"Yes; if it be a good one."

Thus encouraged, the irate captain told with great gusto this story:

A broker came to the gate of Heaven one day, and meeting St. Peter, was asked what he had done to merit heaven. "Why," said the broker, "I once gave two cents to a poor widow who needed it badly." "What else?" asked St. Peter. "I once bought a paper for one cent from a poor newsboy, who also needed it badly." "What shall we do with this fellow?" said St. Peter. "Oh, give him back his three cents," said St. Paul, "and tell him to go to—Hades."

This Captain Codman was a gruff fellow, with a determined yet kindly look; and although he was the last man you would take to have any literary tastes or talents, he was the author of several books, mostly about his own experiences as a sailor. He was a great chum of S. S. Packard, the business college man, another wit of the club, and had something of the humour of David Harum about him. Codman had attended Amherst College for two years, and, being rusticated on a cooked-up charge, had taken to the

sea, and had followed it for thirty years. At one of the meetings he said "his little Latin and less Greek had been useful to him; it was like being vaccinated—you may not feel it, but it is there all the same, and does you a heap of good!" He spoke of the office-holders as an "army of tariff tramps, who had crept into the national almshouse to seek further protection!" When discussing ghosts, he attributed them in most cases to *bad livers;* and where people had had warnings of disasters, they usually forgot to allow for the difference of longitude. Referring to his early education, he said his father had taught him what was the chief end of a boy, but not of a man, because he did not know that himself. Boys who work their way through college make the best timber, and he would limit free instruction to the three R's. The best Boston families were founded by old shipmasters, and not by college graduates. Out of his own class of seventy, there were only two who had not degenerated into mere lawyers, doctors or clergymen!

The Captain spun many yarns about his early life at sea. Once, when in charge of a transport chartered by Turkey, her engine broke down, and to keep the fact from the officials, he invited them on board, entertained them in the cabin, told the mate to start the *donkey* engine, and *sailed* down the Bosphorous to a place where he could make repairs without a suspicion that everything was not "shipshape and Bristol fashion."

Another time he brought home a tea ship from China, discharged the men at New York, and hired a scrub crew to take her to Boston. They were a tough lot, and the next morning refused to holy-stone the decks. The Captain, who was perfectly fearless, called them together and asked, "What's the row?" The ringleader, a strapping, scowling bully, said: "Washing decks wasn't in the contract." "Well, what is?" replied the captain cheerfully. The man replied, "To make sail, steer ship, hoist anchor," etc. "Very good," said Codman, and he jotted down the list and read it aloud. The men nodded, "All right." "Then, Mr. Mate," said the doughty Captain, "you can let go the anchor (thirty fathoms), and we will keep hauling it in and dropping it again until these gentlemen are satisfied." The crew saw the point. They were cornered so skilfully that they had to laugh, and they washed down the decks without another word.

When one member stated in a talk on wine and tobacco that abstaining from tobacco certainly lengthened life, another replied:

"Yes, that is true, for I remember that when I tried to give it up the days seemed to be forty hours long!" "Besides," continued the speaker, "this thing, tobacco, seems to be very curious in its effect; for while I can with a cigar in my mouth think on any subject whatever, without it I can think of nothing but a cigar!"

Another member told a story of a young man who

was very sick, and whose doctor requested him to change his mode of living; to go to a quiet country place, eat more roast beef, drink beef tea and smoke just one cigar a day. The young man did as advised, and when, a month later, he met the doctor, the latter complimented him on his improved appearance.

"Yes," said the young man, "I feel better, and I am better. I went to bed early, ate more roast beef, spent a month in the country, and took great care of myself; but that one cigar a day nearly killed me, for I had never smoked before!"

This was about as good as the declaration of the Irishman who told the doctor that his medicines had made him sick for a long time after he got well!

Another member who contended that a dinner without wine was like meat without salt, and that a little wine inclined men to good fellowship and good humor, told this story: When Robert Chambers, the founder of *Chambers' Journal*, met Sydney Smith in London, he said to him, "You have been in Scotland, Mr. Smith, and you must know that the Scotch have a good deal of humour in them." "Oh, yes," said Sydney Smith, "the Scotch are a very funny people, and have a good deal of humour; but the fact is they need a little operating upon to get it out; and I know no better instrument for this purpose than the corkscrew!" Sydney Smith was great on operations; for it seems he could not get a joke in or out of a Scotchman's head without an operation of some sort!

A new member, an Englishman, who was asked to speak, said with great embarrassment: "I can't make a speech, but I can tell a story. An Englishman, who had recently arrived in New York, wanted to take a sleigh-ride, and went into a livery stable to hire a rig. The proprietor called up to a man in a loft, 'Tom, bring down two buffaloes!' 'Really,' stuttered the Englishman, 'I haven't been long enough in the country to drive *two* buffaloes;' and so, Mr. Chairman, I haven't been long enough in the Twilight Club to make a speech!" The story was so apt and told so modestly that it made a great hit.

When the writer, in a discussion on education, had spoken in high terms of the schools in Germany, where he had studied and taught for years, and in which he declared the teachers laid great stress on logical thinking and little on the memorising of facts, and where languages, literature, history and mathematics were taught with great thoroughness, Mr. Dan Beard, the artist, replied:

"Well, I have been through the Civil War, and have seen a good deal of Germans, Americans, Irishmen and men of other nations; and I have nearly always found that when some special piece of work was to be done, that the American, with perhaps little more education than he had picked up in the streets, would go to work and do the thing while the German was thinking about it."

I thought this a good example of the practical and progressive genius of American youth.

One gentleman began his remarks in this wise: "This discussion reminds me of a certain youngster, the son of a horse-dealer, who, when a horse was to be sold, rode him in fine style, displaying all his good points; but when a horse was to be bought, he rode him in quite a different fashion. One day the youngster had mounted a horse before he knew whether it was to be bought or sold; so, riding up to his father, he whispered to him: 'Say, pop, is this horse to be bought or sold?' So I am inclined to think the speakers to-night are like this youngster; they have been asked beforehand by the adroit and shrewd secretary whether they have a horse to be bought or sold, and have spoken accordingly. But my horse is of a different colour!" So he went on with his horse, regardless of his selling or buying qualities. I could not help thinking this story would have had a telling effect if told by the opposing lawyer, after one of Counsellor Nolan's addresses to a jury, in which he had spoken for five minutes before he found out he was speaking on the wrong side, and then unblushingly turned his speech on the other!

Another gentleman made a very happy beginning in this wise:

"Mr. Chairman, the question has been so thoroughly thrashed out by the other speakers that I feel myself in the position of a certain Irishman who came to Dub-

lin from a distant part of the county to see a barrister about the making of his will. The will was drawn up, signed, witnessed and sealed, and the Irishman departed for his home quite happy. About a week afterward he returned, and, calling at the barrister's house very early in the morning, he rapped loudly at his door. Getting up, the barrister thrust his head out of the window and called out: 'Who's there?' 'It's me, yer honour, Patrick Finnerty,' called out the man. 'I have come to see you about the will!' 'What's the matter with the will?' 'Faith, I have forgotten in it all about meself; I have given away everything and left meself not even a three-legged stool to sit upon!' "

"Now, Mr. Chairman," continued the speaker, "these gentlemen have said so much about this subject they have not left me even a leg to stand upon! However, one point they have forgotten," and so he went on with his one point. When a speaker once makes a good beginning and gets his audience in a good humour, all he has to say is cheerfully listened to.

The Chairman usually introduced each speaker with some terse or piquant remark, characterising the speaker in some way. I shall never forget the way in which one chairman, a witty New York lawyer, introduced a rival of the same cloth by declaring that "he was a man of fluent speech, whose utterances always reminded him of a walk in the autumnal woods, where the withered fagots cracked under his feet, the

sere and yellow leaves were abundant, and *the chestnuts were falling fast!*"

Nothing, however, could surpass the good nature with which all these sallies were taken; for if a speaker only makes his audience laugh while keeping within the bounds of propriety, everything in the way of banter or sarcasm is readily pardoned. One member, though a poet and prose writer of no small ability, was usually made the butt of the wits and satirists of the club; and yet he always bobbed up serenely, replying good-naturedly to all attacks; and I verily believe he is more tenderly loved than any other member of the club.

On one occasion, when Max O'Rell was one of the guests, and the subject was: "What books have helped me?" Max declared that the only book that had helped him was "John Bull and His Island!" "One day," continued the speaker, "I happened to sit down near two ladies in a London Metropolitan car, when I heard one say to the other, 'What do you think of this book everybody is talking about, "John Bull and His Island"?' 'Not much,' replied the other; 'what can you expect of an Irishman, anyway?' "

Max declared that this book, which had not only enriched him, but had made him an author and lecturer, was the outcome of notes on English life, jotted down while he was working as a teacher of French in London, and which he used to read to his wife, who induced him to make a book of them. The manuscript of this book, perhaps the most successful of his time,

he had offered to a score of publishers before he found one who ventured to publish it.

Another member quoted Reynolds's advice: "Never depend upon your genius; if you have talent, industry will improve it; if you have none, industry will supply the deficiency." If Reynolds could say this of industry, what industrious man cannot succeed?

In a talk on Money and Income, one gentleman, a well-known newspaper writer, began thus:

Some years ago I was travelling to the West, when I struck up acquaintance with a gentleman on the train, with whom I had a good deal of interesting conversation. On separating, I said to him: "Now, tell me frankly, my friend, what is your aim in life?" "Well, sir," said he, "my aim is simply this: I want to make money enough to be able to say to any man living, 'Go to h—ll'!" "Now," said the speaker, "this man simply expressed in a rough way a wish that is dear to every American—the desire of personal independence. Among intelligent thinking men, money is not sought to make a display of wealth, and all that; but in order to be independent. It must be a Scotch wish, too; for I never saw it so forcibly expressed as in Burns's lines to a young friend:

" 'To court Dame Fortune, assiduous wait upon her,
And gather gear by all the wiles that's justified by honour:
Not for to hide it in a hedge, or for a train attendant,
But for the glorious privilege of being independent.' "

At a dinner where the subject of "Turning Points in Life" was discussed, an eccentric gentleman, for-

merly a clergyman but now a lawyer, expressed his disbelief in religious "turning points," meaning thereby so-called "conversions;" repudiating the idea that religion had the slightest influence on a man's business conduct, declaring that no man with such a creed had ever made any impression on his times. A noted Jersey lawyer then got at him, alluding to him as a "Tammany politician." The eccentric ex-divine declared he had never seen the inside of Tammany Hall. So he begged for an opportunity to say a few words in reply. This being granted, he said substantially: "I do not object to being called a pickpocket, a falsifier, or *even a Tammany lawyer;* but I do object to having anybody intimate that I ever was a Republican!" Instantly the Jersey lawyer was on his feet and begged to be allowed to say "two words—only two words." When this was granted, the Jerseyman exclaimed, with great emphasis, "Thank God!" and sat down amid laughter and tumultuous applause.

But retorts of this character were seldom indulged in at the Twilight Club, the wit generally being entirely of an impersonal nature; and was always good-humoured. For instance, on one occasion a speaker said that though he was by accident foreign born, he was by choice an American citizen, and proud of it—so proud of it that while on a visit to his native land, where he had been offered the nomination for a seat in the House of Commons, in a district where he was sure of being elected, he

declined it, preferring to remain an American citizen. This same New Jersey lawyer, who was opposed to the previous speaker in politics, arose and asked the presiding officer for leave to make a motion, which, being granted, he moved that "the Twilight Club send a cable message of congratulations to the House of Commons!" This lawyer was Col. Fuller.

One night when some labour question was up, John Swinton, who had recently returned from Europe, made such a strong and stirring address, recounting the movements of the masses of working men in Europe, that one gentleman was so deeply moved and touched by his address, he exclaimed to a friend, "Let us go now, for fear that other speakers destroy the impression"; but he did not and could not go. Swinton spoke like one inspired on this occasion.

On another occasion Mr. James Redpath, who was one of the best speakers at the Club, gave a remarkable account of the able writers and speakers whom he had known while acting as manager of a Lecture Bureau. I shall never forget that address. When he was speaking you could hear a pin drop; every one was so attentive. He told, for instance, about Wendell Phillips, how that he (Phillips) was going to speak to a few Irishmen and said that the lecture would not be worth reporting. But Redpath found that that lecture was one of the most brilliant of the course, and it stands to-day among the best of his printed addresses.

As I cannot make a full report of any one speech, perhaps the best I can do is to quote the following clever report (by a correspondent of the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*) of a speech delivered at a sister club, which has always strongly reminded me of the speeches at the Twilight. It may serve, at any rate, as an amusing specimen of after-dinner speaking:

I was at a Lotos Club dinner recently, when a pretty well-known journalist, being called on for "a speech! a speech!" after the uproarious habit of that intellectual circus, rose and told a story. "It might be called," said he, with a sly look at the head of the table, where sat in presidential majesty a rather corpulent, slightly bald, middle-aged man, "it might be called 'How I Got Into a Magazine.'" Then he changed to the other foot, blushed slightly, leaned on his fork, and said:

"I had an article once which I thought would make six pages in a magazine—if it got a chance. I concluded to give the *Atlantic Monthly* the benefit of it, because that was a superb creation of the human intellect and ought to be encouraged. [Smiles and raps on the table.] I sent it to that periodical, saying that it was my maiden effort, and asking the editor to send me the $100 by draft or money order. In three weeks it came back, to my utter amazement, with the printed notice that it was excellent, but not adapted, etc. I saw that the editor of the *Atlantic* was a fool. [Cheers around the table and cries of satirical approval.] I sent it to another well-known magazine, offering it for $50. It came back in two months, just when I was looking for it to appear. That magazine, too,

was evidently a failure! I then sent it (price $15) to a first-class weekly that printed just such things as my sketch, 'Mary Wanley's Guide,' but not half as well written. [Cheers and encouraging remarks.] Again it was sent back. [Laughter.] I could not understand it. I could not believe that our periodical literature was decaying so fast. I offered it to another journalist for nothing, telling him that I was a beginner, that this was the first effort of the sort I had ever offered to anybody, and I watched his face as he examined it suspiciously, and finally returned it to me, saying that the style was faulty; the idea was good, though it might have been used heretofore; but with study and careful practice I would make, perhaps, in time, etc. [Laughter.]

"I was mad, gentlemen!" said the speaker, amid the roars of the company, and, leaning on the chair with his other hand, he went on: "Something heroic must be done! Two years had passed. It was now 1871. I resolved to storm the citadel. I borrowed my brother's sealskin overcoat, so as to look as imposing as possible, and struck for an illustrated magazine I had not tried, one of the finest works of art in the world. The doorkeeper stood briskly aside as I went in and asked for the editor, whose name I did not then know. I was speedily ushered into the presence of a young man, who asked me to be seated, and inquired my business. 'To see the editor.' He would examine my manuscript. 'Very well,' I said, still standing. 'I must have an answer in fifteen minutes, as I leave on the next train for Boston.' He parleyed, but I was severe and taciturn, and reached for the manuscript which he had taken. 'I will see Mr. ——,' said he, naming the editor himself. The latter appeared. 'We will

send this to you by mail,' said he, 'if it is not used.' 'I can leave it with you only fifteen minutes,' I replied. He looked surprised and glanced at the title. 'You can surely leave it one night,' he expostulated. 'No,' I rejoined resolutely, 'I have other uses for it.' In that I suppose he scented the opposition house, for he took off his overcoat (he was just going home) and said: 'I will look it over now.' [Cheers around the table.]

"He was a fine-looking man, as he sat there in the dying twilight [cries of "Oh!" "Ah!"]—a rather corpulent, slightly bald, middle-aged man [at this the company turned toward the presiding officer, who was as red as a boiled lobster, and then they roared with glee], and he looked up in about ten minutes, and said: 'I will take this story; Mr. Oliver, please make out a cheque for $50.' 'What?' I asked, '$50? My price is $125.' 'Ah!' said he, passing the manuscript to me, 'it is more than we ever pay anybody, except famous writers.' I delivered a stately bow, took the roll of paper, and turned out of the door. 'Well!' said he, calling to me, 'we'll take it at $125;' and Mr. Oliver made out my cheque. [Cheers and roars of laughter. The man at the head of the table had turned a sort of indigo blue.]

"The worst of it is, or the best of it," said the narrator, "that I have not seen or heard of that sketch during all these seven years!"

The club hall rang with cheers and laughter, for his manner of telling the story was indescribably droll, and then all parties turned toward the presiding officer, who was recognised as the hero of the narrative.

He rose slowly to his feet; the blue went out of his face, and even the scarlet turned to the rosy flush

which is habitual to it, and he smiled cheerfully by the time the cheers and guffaws which greeted him had died away.

"The fact is," he began deprecatingly, and then there was another great roar of laughter. "Yes; I well remember the circumstances. I accepted the sketch to keep its writer from inflicting it on some weaker magazine. [Loud laughter.] Our house is rich. It can afford to stand in the breach. If it were not for the work we do in burying articles capable of injury, the mortality among magazines would be incalculable. [Laughter and cheers.] Yes, gentlemen, when a person with a flighty temperament comes in [laughter], we exert every nerve to get possession of his manuscript, to prevent the desolation that might otherwise ensue. [Cheers and jingling of glasses.] Such an article might fall into the hands of men who might inadvertently print it! [Cheers and cries of "Hear, hear!"] We lock it up in a strong safe."

The company, led by the journalist, who blushed again at his awkward position, then drank to the prosperity of the sagacious magazine, while the editor went on seriously to say that he had eight immense fireproof safes full of stories and other manuscripts that had been bought and paid for, some of the matter extending back many years. "If nobody should write a word for the body of our magazine for the next ten years," he said, "it would appear regularly every month, and I doubt if its quality would be at all impaired."

CHAPTER XVI

THE CONVERSATION OF AUTHORS

"The business of life is mainly carried on by this difficult art of literature, and according to a man's proficiency in that art shall be the freedom and fulness of his intercourse with other men."—*R. L. Stevenson.*

I HAVE heard it said and seen it written that authors are generally dull fellows in conversation; and I have also heard it said that if there is any author whose works you particularly admire, you should never try to make his personal acquaintance; for if you do you will be disappointed. Now this is all nonsense. No sensible person expects an author to talk like his books. If he did he would be a bore. His books are the results of patient thought, of inspired moments, and of much pains; and we do not expect all this in the common conversation of any man.

And as to their being poor talkers, I have known a good many authors and never knew one that was not a good talker. Precisely as "a jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it," so is the talk of an author. Everything depends upon the person who listens to his talk. With uncongenial company an author is apt to be silent; but with those who can appreciate him no man can talk better. And why not? Is it not his business, his delight to express thought?

And does he not know that with every thought he expresses forty others spring up in its place?

Some say that authors keep their best thoughts for their books. Well, some may do so. But when a man sits down to talk to a friend, he will, if he be a man at all, express the best that is in him, without keeping anything back. He never thinks of his books; or if he does, it is only to express verbally what he has already written. Nor does he care or fear that any man may borrow his thought. The original thinker knows that the more thought he expresses, the more he has to express; that the world of thought is boundless, inexhaustible; and that no man can express *his* thought as he can himself. If it be genuine, it is sure to be impressive; for imitation is sure to look counterfeit. When a man attempts to put his thought on paper it must, if it be of any value at all, be the result of his own cogitations, his own experience; otherwise it is sure to be unprofitable. So it is with his talk, which is often more interesting than his writing. The best an author can do with another's thought is to quote it as confirmatory of his own, or of what he wishes to enforce or prove. Of course, many of his thoughts may have been uttered by others; but as he never knew these, and does not consciously imitate them, his thoughts are as original with him as theirs were with them, and probably quite as well expressed.

Let us see what is said of the talk of authors by those who knew them. I need not mention the universal

testimony to the brilliant talk of Sheridan, Macaulay, Coleridge, Voltaire, Mme. de Staël, Byron, Sydney Smith and Goethe; these are too well known; but I shall glance at some of those of whom it is said they were poor talkers. Goldsmith, for instance, is reported to have been almost idiotic in his talk; and here is one of the evidences given to prove it. One Cooke, who had been a law student and near neighbour of Goldsmith's in the Temple, was asked by Rogers, the poet, what Goldsmith really was in conversation. "Sir," said Cooke, "he was a fool. The right word never came to him. If you gave him back a bad shilling, he would say: 'Why, it's as good a shilling as ever was born.' You know he ought to have said coined. Coined, sir, never entered his head. He was a fool, sir." What a fine proof this is of Goldsmith being a fool! I think it shows pretty clearly that Cooke was one. The latter seems to have been a lawyer, and many lawyers are mere word quibblers, incapable of humour. *Born*, in this case, was simply Goldsmith's humour; an expression such as may be heard among Irishmen every day. Shakespeare makes Jack Cade say: "Salad was born to do me good." Was Jack Cade or the author of "Henry VI." a fool?

Goldsmith never attempted to put his fine style and wise thoughts in his conversation; these were for his publisher, who paid for them; and he reserved his chaff for such fellows as Cooke, who thought an author should talk "like a book." Let me give a couple

more of his foolish utterances. When, one day at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, he said he thought he could write a good fable; that this kind of composition required great simplicity of language; and that in most fables the animals introduced seldom spoke in character, Dr. Johnson burst out in uproarious laughter. "Why, doctor," said Goldsmith, "this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if *you* now were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales!" Was not that a foolish remark?

When, at an Academy dinner, a Swiss named Moser interrupted Goldsmith by saying: "Hush, hush! Toctor Shonson is going to zay someding!" Goldsmith retorted: "And are you sure you will comprehend what he says?" That, too, was spoken like a fool, I suppose. Even in boyhood he was capable of a retort worthy of Pope himself. When, after his recovery from the smallpox, a thoughtless and notorious scapegrace said to him: "Why, Noll, you are quite a fright! When do you mean to get handsome again?" Oliver replied: "I mean to improve, sir, when you do!" And when, at one of the country dances, little Oliver jumped up and danced a little pas seul, the fiddler, struck by his ungainly appearance, exclaimed: "Æsop!" which elicited a roar of laughter. Then Oliver, turning and looking disdainfully at his assailant, said in an audible voice:

> Heralds, proclaim aloud this saying,
> See Æsop dancing, and *his Monkey* playing!

This is the man who is set down as a fool in conversation, as one who "wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll!" This was Garrick's saying, and I think it may be answered by Foote. "Good Heavens, Mr. Foote," exclaimed a lively actress at the Haymarket; "what a humdrum kind of a man Mr. Goldsmith appears to be in our green-room compared with the figure he makes in his poetry!" "The reason of that, madam," replied the wit, "is because the Muses are better companions than the Players!"

Who that knows anything of Goldsmith can fail to see that in his usually simple, good-natured talk many a pleasant bit of humour, many a sensible thought, must have been uttered by him. I suppose it was because Johnson was a better talker than writer and Goldsmith a better writer than talker, that the one suffered by comparison with the other. But I would rather listen to the simple prattle of Goldsmith than to the learned and dogmatic utterances of Johnson; at least Goldy would, I am sure, have been far more amusing to me. Is it not a pleasant thing to find a man of genius, a poet and unequalled prose writer, to be a simple and plain man in his talk? That to me is delightful. Your great talker, who gets off stunning things, and monopolises the time and attention of the company, is usually an egotist and a bore.

And your very learned talker, like Johnson, who thought he was always in the right, or your essay-

producing talker, like Macaulay, who monopolised the attention of the company, would never be tolerated in good society to-day. Even in the time of Johnson the French could not endure such a talker.

A good illustration of this is shown in the following story. The Marquis St. Lambert once introduced to the salon of Mme. Geoffrin an author of considerable learning and ability, who, after attending her receptions for some months, was informed one day by the servant at the door that madame could not see him. "Is she ill?" "No, sir." "Gone out?" "No, sir." "Why, I see M. Diderot and the Abbé Délille at the window; surely you must be mistaken." "Sir, I beg ten thousand pardons; but madame cannot see you." The learned gentleman wended his way to his patron, who, after hearing his complaint, handed him the following note from Mme. Geoffrin:

My Dear Marquis: I close my doors on your learned protégé, Monsieur B——; because, as it happens, I am still a little attached to life—thanks to your friendship and that of the accomplished few who resemble you—and if I should see him often, I should be vexed to death. Your Monsieur B—— is, in short, intolerable: *he is always in the right.*

It is not good to be over-wise or over-knowing; nor is it good to be absolutely infallible. Solomon says we must not be even over-religious. The story goes that the learned Monsieur B—— took the lesson to heart, and profited so well by it that, after a time, he was

reinvited and readmitted to the receptions of the distinguished Frenchwoman.

By the way, these receptions of cultivated people in France are very fountains of inspiration to the French author. It is here that he comes in contact with the intelligence of the world, and gets ideas which he works up in a literary form. The worldlings cannot do this; they enjoy the talk as it flows; and the author contributes as much to it as they do; but he crystallises some of it in a shape that only a man of genius is capable of. Sometimes he gets a hint which supplies him with material for a story or a poem; sometimes he learns a fact which gives rise to an essay or a criticism; and sometimes he is supplied with incidents which he works up into a comedy or a tragedy.

Molière, after his introduction to the brilliant company who met at the Hotel de Rambouillet, declared that he needed no longer to study classic authors; he had the world before him, and all manner of tragedies and comedies constantly exhibited before his eyes.

Conversation with intelligent people, with the active, thinking, progressive spirits of the day, is to the French author food for his brain and nerve for his arm. Nor is any man more welcome in French society than a good writer; the French know how to esteem and honour such a man.

The talk of an author, like that of any other man,

may be largely tinctured by the nature of his occupation or by the peculiar tendencies of his mind; but it is not necessarily bookish. Mr. G. A. Sala, who knew Dickens well, thus speaks of his conversation:

Dickens seldom talked at length on literature, and very rarely said anything about art. What he liked to talk about was the latest new piece at the theatre, the latest exciting trial or police case, the latest social craze or social swindle, and especially the latest murder or the newest thing in ghosts. He delighted to tell short droll stories, and occasionally to indulge in comic similes, and to draw waggish parallels. He frequently touched on political subjects—always from what was then a strong Radical point of view; but his conversation, I am bound to say, once for all, did not rise above the amusing talk of a shrewd, clever man of the world, with the heartiest hatred of shams and humbugs.

This is just what I should expect; for surely no man would expect the novelist to be as moving and spell-binding in his talk as he is in his books.

There probably never was a more entertaining and instructive talker than Henry Thomas Buckle, the well-known author of the "History of Civilisation." It was not merely his boundless knowledge, his fine command of language, and his wonderful memory, but the interesting and striking things he had to tell, and the way he had of telling things, with the conclusions he drew from them, that made his talk so interesting. "The only advantage of knowing facts," he says him-

self, "is the possibility of drawing conclusions from them—in other words, of rising to the idea, the principle, the law which governs them;" so that "real knowledge consists not in an acquaintance with facts, which only makes a pedant, but in the use of facts, which makes a philosopher."

And of literature—not only of English, but of French and German literature, together with the ancient classical—he had such a wide and intimate knowledge that his mind glowed with the noblest passages in each, and he would sometimes inspire all listeners with the forcible and eloquent manner in which he would cite and repeat some of them in illustration or confirmation of some truth he was enforcing. Although this sounds or seems Macaulayish, he was in other respects quite different; for he knew when to stop, was a good listener, and always ready to answer questions. Wherever he went he was sure to leave a pleasant impression, sure to give more pleasure or more information than he received.

"Buckle," says a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* (April, 1863), who met him at dinner in Egypt, "talks with a velocity and a fulness that is wonderful. The rest could do little but listen and ask questions. And yet he did not seem to be lecturing; the streams of his conversation flowed along easily and naturally. Nor was it didactic; the range of his reading had covered everything in elegant literature, as well as the ponderous works whose titles make so formidable a list at the beginning of his History; and as he re-

members everything he has read, he can produce his stores upon the moment for the illustration of any subject that may turn up. He told anecdotes, too, of Johnson, Lamb, Macaulay, Voltaire, Talleyrand, and Wordsworth, and he quoted passages from Burke and Junius at length and in exact words."

Buckle's nature was anything but that of a recluse. "The brilliancy of Mr. Buckle's conversation," says one of his friends, "was well known in the social world; but what the world did not know is how entirely it was the same among a few intimate friends. For his talk with them was as fascinating as it was at a large party, with whom success meant celebrity."

CHAPTER XVII

SOMETHING MORE ABOUT THE TALK OF AUTHORS

> "The pleasant things in the world are pleasant thoughts, and the great art in life is to have as many of them as possible."—*C. N. Bovee.*

But let us return for a moment to some of the authors who were said to be poor talkers. Butler, the author of "Hudibras," is another of these. The chief characteristic of this satiric poem is the patient, careful, conscientious labour and skill with which it is worked out. "Hudibras" came out in three parts, at three different times; and probably some persons expected the author to show the whole of it at once in half an hour's talk. This is apparently what Lord Dorset (not Charles II., as falsely reported) expected of him; for it is stated that at a tavern, where a meeting was arranged between them, Butler was "quiet and reserved during the first bottle; full of wit and spirit during the second; and dull and stupid during the third," whereupon his lordship's comment was that "the poet was like a ninepin, great in the middle, but small at both ends."

This was witty, and I have no doubt that his lordship thought himself much wittier than the poet.

Well, who would not be dull and stupid after the third bottle of port? Butler was not a "three-bottle man," like Fielding's fox-hunting parsons and country gentlemen, but a quiet, scholarly gentleman, whom Selden found good company, and who, like all other sensible men, could talk better sober than drunk.

Another of these dull fellows is Addison, the silent, shy, sensitive author of the *Spectator*, whose writings gained him the friendship of Lord Halifax and the position of Secretary of State. In a large assembly, where a certain lady reproached him for his silence, "Madam," said he, "I have little small change; but I can draw for a thousand pounds." So he could, with both tongue and pen; for Steele and others who knew him well declared that among intimate friends he was excellent company, full of life and talk. Was he not the friend of the most eminent men of the time, and loved by all who knew him? That is, by all except Pope, the envious little Pope, who hated any one that rivalled him in public favour. Compared with the fashionable people of his day Addison was one in a hundred thousand, a man of delicate taste and refined thought, and it is no wonder he could not be brilliant among the rough, uncultivated gentry of his age.

No author can talk well except in congenial company and to sympathetic hearers. "When one meets his mate, society begins," says Emerson; and Fichte

declared that in conversation he "could succeed only with brave good people." In other company the author sometimes feels as if a frost had come over him, which he is powerless to remove. Not every one can, like Coleridge, be free from annoyance in the company of vulgar people, regarding them as objects of amusement, of another race altogether. Shakespeare, as we have seen, could do this, and so could Scott; but how many such men are to be found?

Schopenhauer thus sharply (and, as I think, somewhat cynically) describes the common people in their intercourse with men of genius:

The Pythagorean principle that "like is known only by like" is in many respects a true one. It explains how it is that every man understands his fellow only in so far as he resembles him, or, at least, is of a similar character. What one man is sure of perceiving in another is that which is common to all, namely, the vulgar, petty, or mean elements of our nature: here every man has a perfect understanding of his fellows; but the advantage which an intellectual man has over another does not exist for the other, who, be the talents in question as extraordinary as they may, will never see anything beyond what he possesses himself, for the very good reason that this is all that he wants to see. If there is anything on which he is in doubt, it will give him a vague sense of fear, mixed with pique; because it passes his comprehension, and is therefore uncongenial to him. [I suppose this is the reason why Shakespeare was unnoticed in his time.] This is the reason why mind alone understands mind;

why works of genius are fully understood and valued only by men of genius, and why it must necessarily be a long time before such men attract the attention of the crowd, for whom they will never, in any true sense, exist.

This, too, is why one man will look another in the face with the impudent assurance that he will never see there anything but a miserable resemblance of himself; and this is just what he will see, as he cannot grasp anything beyond it. Hence the bold way in which one man will contradict another. Finally, it is for the same reason that great superiority of mind isolates a man, and that men of high gifts keep themselves from the vulgar (and that means every one); for if they mingle with the crowd, they can communicate only such parts of them as they share with the crowd, and so make themselves common. Nay, even though they possess some well-founded and authoritative reputation among the crowd, they are not long in losing it, together with any personal weight it may give them; since all are blind to the qualities on which it is based (their genius as poets or artists), but have their eyes open to anything that is vulgar and common to themselves. They soon discover the truth of the Arabian proverb: "Joke with a slave, and he will show you his heels" (i. e., kick you).

It follows that a man of high gifts must, in his intercourse with others, always reflect that the best part of him is out of sight; so that if he desires to know accurately how much he can be to any one else, he has only to consider how much the man in question is to him. This, as a rule, is precious little; and therefore he is as uncongenial to the other as the other is to him. Like is known only by like.

Schopenhauer was a philosopher and deep thinker; and certainly there was very little in common between him and the multitude. In fact, the *studirten Klassen*, like the *Adeligen*, hold themselves quite aloof, in his country, from the rank and file. Among the university students, for example, only those who are or have been students are respected; the rest are *Rindvieh* (cattle).

But the poets and novel writers, both in Germany and elsewhere, look upon the common people with different eyes. They regard them as Coleridge did, as creatures to be studied, or to be amused with. Some men declare that all great reforms and reformers come from below upward, not from above downward.

Rousseau, who was usually dull with common people, talked like one inspired with David Hume; Hawthorne, who was shy and silent in a mixed company, talked delightfully with James T. Fields; and Burns, the peasant poet, talked so well and interestingly in all companies that one noble lady declared "he was the only man who ever in conversation took her completely off her feet." When Burns arrived at an inn after midnight, all the household got up to hear him talk. Like Shakespeare and Scott, all sorts of people were interesting to him.

That strange, sensitive, proud, disdainful being, Edgar Allan Poe, was in genial company a brilliant talker; but silent and absorbed in any other. Even the revengeful and malignant Griswold speaks of his

conversation as "almost supermortal in its eloquence," and Mrs. Osgood declares that "for hours she has listened to him entranced by strains of such pure and celestial eloquence as she had never heard or read elsewhere." Racine, who was, like Addison, shy and silent in company, possessed rare tact in making others talk. "My talent with men of the world," he writes to his son, "consists not in making them feel that I have any parts, but in showing them that they have." A fine fellow, indeed; the very man after Chesterfield's heart. Locke, the philosopher, used to do something of this kind; for it is recorded of him that he was wont to lead people into talking about their trade or profession, whereby he always learned something new.

This method, however, which has something of the orange-squeezing process in it, is not always to be recommended. It must be done with great tact, if done at all; for few persons like to be talked to about their trade or profession, and still fewer to exercise their professional skill in private. If they do so voluntarily, it is all right; not otherwise. A wealthy merchant, inviting an eminent violinist to dinner, added, as if by an afterthought, "and, by the way, bring your violin along with you." "No," said the sensitive artist; "my violin never dines;" nor did he on this occasion allow either himself or his violin to dine with the crafty merchant.

Authors, too, generally dislike to be talked to about their books, especially when the talker is a eulogist.

"Oh," said Goethe to one who talked to him about "Werther," "I have quite a new skin now—I have cast that off long ago."

Some writers much prefer conversation to composition, and would, if they could, never express their thoughts at all, except in the way of conversation. Dr. John Brown, the author of "Rab and his Friends," and of many excellent essays, was one of these. He was not only strongly averse to writing, but had a very low estimate of his own productions, which are highly esteemed by all lovers of good literature. An anonymous writer in the New York *Tribune* thus speaks of him:

The late Dr. John Brown, certainly one of the most delightful essayists of his time, was, strangely enough, afflicted with a profound self-distrust. He could not be persuaded that he was in any sense a great writer, or that he could do anything people would care to read. No number of favourable reviews could change his idea permanently on that head. It might be pleasant for a moment to read them; it was kind, of course, in people to write them; but they gave him no encouragement to try his hand again. Not even Thackeray's letter, which he has published, or that of Wendell Holmes, which appeared lately in *The Scotsman*, could make him at all believe that it was his clear duty to go on. Therefore, his friends had very hard work to get him to take up his pen again. He would talk, and tell the most delightful stories, and make the gayest-hearted fun at pleasant social gatherings; and one longed to have a shorthand writer hid in some

cupboard near by to take down the wise, quaint, odd, and tender words which then so naturally flowed from him. But to sit down and write, and still more to correct proofs, the very thought of it seemed to freeze him.

The conversation of two famous authors is thus interestingly discussed in Max Müller's Reminiscences ("Auld Lang Syne"):

Browning was full of sympathy, nay, of worship, for anything noble and true in literature, ancient or modern. And what was most delightful in him was his ready response, his generosity in pouring out his own thoughts to anybody who shared his sympathies. For real and substantial conversation there was no one his equal, and even in the lighter after-dinner talk he was admirable. His health seemed good, and he was able to sacrifice much of his time to society. He had one great advantage: he never consented to spoil his dinner by making, or, what is still worse, by having to make, a speech. I once felt greatly aggrieved, sitting opposite Browning at one of the Royal Academy dinners. I had to return thanks for literature and scholarship, and was, of course, rehearsing my speech during the whole of dinner-time, while he enjoyed himself talking to his friends. When I told him that it was a shame that I should be made a martyr of while he was enjoying his dinner in peace, he laughed, and said that he had said "No" once for all, and that he had never in his life made a public speech. I believe that poets, as a rule, are not good speakers. They are too careful about what they wish to say. As dinner advanced, I became more and more

convinced of the etymological identity of honour and onus. At last my turn came. Having to face the brilliant society which is always present at this dinner, including the Prince of Wales, and the ministers of both parties, the most eminent artists, authors, scientists, and critics, I had, of course, learned my speech by heart, and was getting on very well, when suddenly I saw the Prince of Wales laughing and saying something to his neighbour. At once the thread of my speech was broken. I began to think whether I could have said anything that made the Prince laugh, and what it could have been, and while I was thinking in every direction, I suddenly stood speechless. I thought it was an eternity, and I was afraid I should have to collapse and make the greatest fool of myself that ever was. I looked at Browning, and he gave me a friendly nod; so at that moment my grapple-irons caught the lost cable, and I was able to finish my speech. When it was over, I turned to Browning and said: "Was it not fearful, that pause?" "Far from it," said he; "it was excellent. It gave life to your speech. Everybody saw you were collecting your thoughts, and that you were not simply delivering what you had learned by heart. Besides, it did not last half a minute." To me it had seemed at least five or ten minutes. But after Browning's good-natured words, I felt relieved, and enjoyed at least what was left of a most enjoyable dinner, the only enjoyable public dinner I know.

The story Max Müller tells of Lord Tennyson is equally interesting:

It was generally after dinner, when smoking his pipe and sipping his whiskey and water, that Tennyson

began to thaw, and to take a more active part in conversation. People who have not known him then have hardly known him at all. During the day he was often very silent and absorbed in his own thoughts; but in the evening he took an active part in the conversation of his friends. His pipe was almost indispensable to him; and I remember one occasion when I and several friends were staying at his house, the question of tobacco turned up. I confessed that for years I had been a perfect slave to tobacco; so that I could neither read nor write a line without smoking; but that at last I had rebelled against this slavery, and had entirely given up tobacco. "Anybody can do that," he said, "if he chooses to do it." When his friends still continued to doubt and to tease him, "Well," he said, "I shall give up smoking from to-night." The very same evening I was told that he threw his pipes and his tobacco out of the window of his bedroom. The next day he was most charming, though somewhat self-righteous. The second day he became very moody and captious; the third day nobody knew what to do with him. But after a disturbed night I was told that he got out of bed in the morning, went quietly into the garden, picked up one of his broken pipes, stuffed it with the remains of the tobacco strewed about, and then, having had a few puffs, came to breakfast, all right again. Nothing was said any more about giving up tobacco.

Max Müller was also a friend of James Russell Lowell, whose conversation he characterises as "inexhaustible, his information astonishing." The best description of Lowell's conversation is perhaps that given by Justin McCarthy in his "Reminiscences":

Lowell had a wonderful gift of conversation, and his discourse was all conversation, and not talk; at least, he did not talk at his listeners, or stream away as if he were pouring out words for talking's sake. I have heard men more brilliant in conversation than Lowell, but I have heard no man who seemed more gifted by nature with the happy faculty which can respond to the thoughts of his hearers, and bring out their best thoughts in response to his own. I remember that he once began to tell me by chance of some rare and precious gift of wine that had been sent to him—wine the value of which it would be hardly possible to estimate by any extravagance set out in a price list; and then he wandered on to descant upon the impossibility of such a treasure being adequately appreciated by a quiet literary worker like himself, and on this thread of idea he hung so many curious conceits, such gems of phrase, such chaplets of fancy, that we seemed to have iridescent bubbles of fantasy sent floating before our eyes and before our minds by every chance breath from the worker of the magic.

And what Mr. McCarthy says of him as an after-dinner speaker is really too good to omit.

Lowell developed in London a gift of which, so far as I know, he had not given any clear evidence at home. He became one of the most delightful and fascinating after-dinner speakers I have ever heard. I rank him second, and only second, to Charles Dickens as an after-dinner speaker. He never said anything which was not fresh, original, striking; he made the most commonplace theme sparkle with fancy and humour, with exquisite phrase and poetic suggestive-

ness. I think the famous old illustration about the orator receiving in a vapour from his audience that which he gives back as a flood, would have applied admirably to Lowell; for it seemed to me that the manifest delight of his London audiences had the effect of making him a great after-dinner speaker as he went along.

To sum up the whole matter, it is evident that authors in congenial company are equal in conversation to any class of men whatever. Where principles or theories are discussed, the latest thing in art or science, politics or political economy, or anything worth talking about, the author will rarely be behind the best in the company. Who has ever thought of making a book of any one's talk except that of an author, an artist, or a statesman? What man of fashion, or trade, or finance, what money-maker or millionaire has had a Boswell, a Boschinger, or an Eckermann to record his talk? How many thousands have regretted that Shakespeare had no Boswell?

I have heard a story about Goethe, which, though probably unrecorded, looks characteristic, and is worth telling. I heard it from a German friend, who loved Goethe. When, one evening, a stranger came to see the poet, he was tired of seeing strangers, whose talk was in no way edifying to him. So he came slowly downstairs and sat down by the table, sullen, silent, solitary, with folded arms, seeming plainly to say: "Well, here I am; now look at me, and begone!"

The stranger, who was a Yankee, took in the situation at once. So seizing the candle, and carefully examining him all round, he laid down a small coin on the table, and was about to depart. Then Goethe burst out in a loud fit of laughter; rose up, shook the stranger heartily by the hand, and complimented him on his ready wit. Then a lively and animated conversation took place between the two; for the great man now saw that he had here no ordinary stranger, and felt proud that such a man had come to see him. Thus the spirit of humour and sympathy being awakened, the two came near each other, and the stranger afterward declared that the conversation which followed was one of the very best he had ever enjoyed.

So it is with all authors. The spirit must be moved; a link of some sort must be formed; or else the two will be as distant toward each other as one milestone is to another.*

*If any of my younger readers should wish to taste something like the conversations of literary men, they might consult with pleasure and profit either or both of two works that are looked upon as masterpieces in their way—the "Noctes Ambrosianæ," by Professor Wilson (Kit North), or the "Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen," by Walter Savage Landor. The first, though imaginary conversations, too, is full of rollicking humour, wit, satire and sarcasm; but it contains some of the most beautiful and delightful passages in literature. Wilson was a prose poet. Some of the conversations are by that bright, witty, humorous, Irish genius Dr. Maginn, and others are, I think, by Lockhart, author of the "Life of Sir Walter Scott." Landor's "Conversations"

are of a high and serious nature, in which he makes his Greek and Roman characters speak as we should expect them to speak, and his English historical characters are as brave and earnest as they were in life. The work is over high and serious to be popular. After all, there is nothing better in literature than Shakespeare and Molière for any young person who wishes to become perfect in conversation—not to speak of the wide knowledge of human nature, of philosophic thought, of language and manners, to be derived from these poets. Of the conversation of Dr. Johnson and his friends I have already spoken. After Boswell's "Johnson," the most interesting, entertaining, and instructive book I have ever read is Eckermann's "Conversations with Goethe," which is better than any of the biographies of the poet, for it reveals his aims, hopes, and fears, indeed his whole soul.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONVERSATIONS WITH STRANGERS

> "Few things are more perplexing than that restraint with which we first meet a stranger; we do not know whether it is best to advance or to retreat, to smile, or to look grave."—*Acton.*

A WRITER in the London *Spectator* speaks of the delightful times he enjoyed in listening, unobserved, to the conversations of strangers—"accidental conversations," he calls them—and recommends the practice to travellers as one productive of much pleasure and entertainment. My experience has been the reverse of this. When I have accidentally overheard other people's talk, it has generally been of such a fragmentary and disconnected character that I have been rather tantalised than amused by it. Besides I have always thought it contrary to good manners to listen to the talk of strangers, and have generally endeavoured to avoid hearing, rather than to hear, what they were saying. Yet this writer defends the practice on moral as well as on practical grounds, and boldly declares that "a man has a right to listen to and to overhear all accidental conversations, subject to this limitation, that he does so with the bona fide intention of getting therefrom the amusement which is expected at the

theatre, and nothing but that." This, however, is a point of moral philosophy which I leave for casuists like him to plead or to defend.

Mr. Buckle, who usually travelled in second-class railway carriages, says: "I always talk with the passengers, and usually find very intelligent people in those carriages; the first-class passengers are so dull; as soon as you broach a subject they are frightened." And he declares that he had picked up a great deal of information in this way from commercial travellers, who generally have a thorough knowledge of the country through which they are in the habit of travelling.

How differently people of different nations act in their conduct toward strangers! While one may accost a Frenchman or an Irishman at any time without offence, and indeed with absolute certainty of civil treatment, one hardly dares to speak to an Englishman, for fear of a rebuff! What is it that makes the Englishman so distant and cold, and the Frenchman so accessible and warm? The Englishman comes of a slow-thinking and slow-going race, slower and more sluggish than he is now; while the Frenchman belongs to a quick-witted, warm-blooded, impulsive race, noted for easy manners and ready speech. Probably the same may be said of the Irishman, who belongs in fact to the same race as the Frenchman. The Englishman, being an islander, cut off for nearly a thousand years from communication with foreigners,

knowing them only as invaders to be resisted or enemies to be conquered, is naturally shy and reserved toward strangers; and then, being for the last century or two frequently deceived by foreign scamps and scalawags, who make an asylum of his country, he is suspicious of all who approach him without credentials. The Frenchman has few experiences of this kind; for those who visit France are generally well-to-do people, who bring profit to the shopkeepers and hotel-keepers; so that, even in Paris, foreigners find the natives affable and agreeable on all occasions.

How is it that Americans, who are mostly of the same race as the English, are so much less reserved toward foreigners than Englishmen are? I suppose it is because Americans themselves are mostly foreigners or the children of foreigners; they stand, therefore, more on an equal footing with foreigners; and are not afraid of losing caste by talking to them or making their acquaintance. We are so accustomed to foreigners in this country that we are no longer shy of them; and, on the whole, probably find them quite as agreeable as the natives.

No intelligent man will maintain that most foreigners are knaves; probably but a small percentage of them are such. When I came to Frankfort, in Germany, I was told that most of its inhabitants were Jews. The actual figures were that fifteen per cent. of them belonged to that class. Figures and fancies seldom

agree. The great majority of Europeans who come to this country are anxious to make a better living here than they did at home; and I should be pleased to hear that Europeans entertained as good an opinion of the Americans who come to their country as we do of the Europeans who come to ours. At all events, John Bull's distant bearing toward the foreigners who come to his island is by no means so commendable as Brother Jonathan's open-hearted and hospitable conduct toward those who come to his continent. When in England I found the English especially kind to Americans, whom they don't regard as foreigners, but as children of their own race, and are proud of their relationship to them.

But this is getting away from what I intended to say. Conversation with strangers—how seldom this is found satisfactory or pleasant! If I strike up a conversation with a stranger in a railway train or a steamboat, I find, nine times out of ten, it amounts to nothing more than conventional phrases. He does not know me, and I do not know him; and so we begin a species of fencing, each endeavouring to penetrate the mask of the other, and we keep on thus for a while, until we either discover frankly one to the other, who and what we are, or until one quietly drops away from the other. I have so often found this the case, that I seldom now attempt a conversation with a stranger unless he begins it, for I think I have been more ready to talk with strangers than they have been with me.

Sometimes I have found an hour or two of what would have been tedious waiting suddenly turned into a pleasant experience by striking up acquaintance with a stranger. Some time ago I was one of about twenty persons waiting for an interview with an eminent oculist in New York, and expected nothing else than the usual two hours' silent waiting until my turn came, which had been my fate more than once before, when it turned out otherwise this time. After glancing at some of the books and pamphlets on the parlour table, I sat down beside a gentleman who had also been looking at them, and, after sitting a while in silence, I ventured to remark to him:

"Waiting makes the time long, doesn't it?"

"Indeed it does," he said; "and I've just been thinking whether I shall stay now till my turn comes, or go away and return early to-morrow morning." Then he began telling me how long he had waited here and there on other occasions. I told him my experience of a similar nature; and, by gradual steps, we came to tell each other what brought us there, which led to much talk about medical practice and practitioners, about the habits, peculiarities, fees, etc., of the doctors we had known, and he told me some very curious things concerning those he had had dealings with. Then we branched off into literature, art, the stage, and other matters, and I found him such a charming talker, so well-read, well-informed, and communicative, that the two hours flew by before I was aware,

and I was exceedingly sorry when my turn came to see the physician. Strangely enough, this gentleman was an Englishman, with a name and a character something like Mr. Allworthy in "Tom Jones," and all the air of a man of leisure and culture. I should have supposed such a man would be distant and shy toward strangers; but he was the reverse, and every remark I made called forth two or three from him. He was, however, an Englishman who had travelled, who had mixed a good deal among foreigners and strangers, and who, having had a good many prejudices rubbed off, was no longer the shy islander that most of his countrymen are.

One of the most pleasant acquaintances of this kind that I ever made was that of three English gentlemen whom I met on a Rhine steamer plying between Mayence and Cologne. I have said English gentlemen; and I thought at first they were such; but they turned out to be Irish gentlemen, and I think they were the finest specimens of that genus homo I ever met. Being unacquainted with German, they could not even ask the names of certain spots which attracted their attention on the Rhine; and it was while they were speculating among themselves about these objects of interest, that I ventured to give them the desired information. To my surprise, they received my advances with great cordiality, and readily entered into conversation with me. I saw at once the difference between Irish and English gentlemen; for these

had a cordiality of manner, a quick, witty way of speaking, and a lively off-hand address, which an Englishman rarely exhibits on a first acquaintance, least of all to a stranger. They were Trinity College men, all of them, and seemed to me to have more the air and speech of our best-educated Americans than those of Englishmen; for they had none of that pretentious manner and long disagreeable drawl which are characteristic of many Englishmen. Now I see, thought I, why educated Dubliners are set down as speaking the best English in the world, and why Richard Grant White thought Shakespeare spoke English as the people of Dublin speak now. Well, we had a delightful time, the most pleasant talk all the way to Cologne; and, what seemed strange to me, though they were Irishmen, they were loyal to the government and the queen, and spoke of Parliament and the Ministry as if they sat in Dublin instead of London. I have encountered many Englishmen and many Irishmen, but none that were so pleasant, cordial, and agreeable as these.

On this very trip I saw two Englishmen, obviously men of wealth and probably of rank, sitting below in the cabin, talking low and drinking high, and utterly oblivious of everything and everybody around them, during this grand trip down the Rhine! What did they care for scenery? It was nothing compared with what might be seen in England, you know!

I have, however, had some encounters with Irishmen which were quite of a different character from that described above. And this comes from the fact that I have been perhaps a little too free in expressing my opinions. I once began talking to an intelligent-looking Irishman in New York about Parnell and his policy, when I found my man suddenly turn into a threatening enemy, ready to do me bodily injury for my opinions. The worst of it is, it is hard to beat a decent retreat when one gets into such a fix. A short time ago, while enjoying my glass of beer in an inn in New York, I heard three or four Irishmen close by me talking of a meeting at which Robert Emmet was much spoken of. I was well acquainted with the history of poor Emmet, knew all about the rebellion in which he was engaged, and had many a time read with deep emotion the eloquent speech with which he closed his career. I knew, too, the story of the lady he loved, as told by Washington Irving in the "Sketch-Book," and had often read the pathetic lines written by Moore on Curran's daughter, to whom young Emmet was engaged. So I was naturally interested, on hearing his name repeatedly mentioned, and I ventured to ask one of them:

"Would you kindly tell me what this is about Robert Emmet? What has been done about him lately?"

"And where have ye been that ye have heard nothin' about it? What do ye know about Robert Emmet?" inquired my man.

"Oh, I know all about Emmet and the rebellion of '92. But what is this now about him?"

"And if ye know so much about him, how is it that ye have so little faeling, so little patriotism, as to take no interest in the maeting that celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of his death, the great maeting at Cooper Institute?"

This was said in a menacing, vicious tone, and I saw that a quarrel was threatened. So I answered quietly:

"Well, because in the first place I am not an Irishman; in the second, I do not live in New York; and in the third, I mistook you for a gentleman who would answer a civil question without insult." And I rose to walk away.

"A Saxon! a tory! an informer!" they all three shouted; and as I went out at the door a heavy pewter tankard was flung at my head, which, grazing my hat, went clean through the plate-glass door before me, covering the pavement with fragments. I escaped unhurt; but whether the miscreant escaped paying for the glass door or not, I know not. Had I stayed, he would have sworn *I* had thrown the missile, and made me pay for it. However, his "fling" must have cost him a pretty penny; and I hope this experience taught him a lesson, as it certainly did me.

But let me tell something more pleasant about Irishmen. There is a meeting between two Irishmen in London, strangers to each other, which stands in my memory as one of the pleasantest bits of biography

in literature. When Curran was studying law at Lincoln's Inn, he was sometimes out of funds, and one day, having nothing wherewith to pay for a dinner, he went into St. James's Park, where, sitting on "Penniless Bench," he began whistling Irish airs. A gentleman who was taking a stroll in the park noticed him, and sat down beside him. It was Quin, the actor. He was not long in striking up an acquaintance with the whistler; so after some merry quips and cranks, he made bold to say to him:

"How comes it, young man, that you are whistling Irish airs here while all your companions are gone to dinner?"

"Have you never heard of a man dining on wind?" asked Curran. "That happens to be my case to-day; and so you see I am making the most of it!"

Quin was not long in inviting him to dine on something more substantial, and was amply rewarded by the bright, lively, and witty talk of his brilliant young countryman, who was destined later to be as famous as himself. Quin was delighted with him, and from that day became one of his fast friends. I tell the story from memory—it is some thirty years since I read it—but the best of it is yet to come. Some ten or twelve years after this, when Curran had become a famous lawyer and Quin had just concluded a brilliant professional engagement in Dublin, ending up with a dinner and a gift of plate or something of that sort, the orator of the occasion was Curran, who, in

presenting the plate, alluded to the whistling incident, and concluded with the words: "Splendidly as you have acted on this and on many other occasions, Mr. Quin; brilliant as every one of your performances has been, you *never acted better* than on that occasion when you aided that friendless youth in a strange land among strangers!"

Sometimes the course of one's whole life is changed by an accidental meeting with a stranger. I say accidental: in some cases it might more properly be called providential.

A gentleman whom I know well told me this instructive story:

Here is how I became a teacher. I was working as a printer on a French newspaper in Paris, when, one day, while chatting with a friend in a café on the Boulevard Montmartre, a young gentleman came in, whom my friend introduced to me as a countryman of mine. He was an American, and as I had long been in America, my friend looked upon me, of course, as an American. Well, I got into conversation with the young gentleman, whose name was Martin, and I learned that he was engaged in teaching English in a fashionable school in Paris; that he made a very respectable living in this employment; and that he was living with wife and child in the Faubourg St. Antoine. Curiously enough, he told me that there was such a prejudice against the English of Americans that he was obliged to pass for an Englishman. I said I did not need that, as I was British-born. Then he asked me:

"Are you engaged in teaching?"

"No; in composing."

"What! Music?"

"No, quite a different sort of composition."

"You are a writer for the press?"

"Oh, no; I compose what others write for the press."

"Then, what do you compose?"

"Well, although it is true I compose, I am not a composer, but a compositor."

"Oh, that's it. Well, I suppose you find your knowledge of French and German useful in that business."

"Yes, useful but not profitable. I wish I could make it as profitable as your English as spoken by Englishmen."

"You can easily do so."

"How so?"

"Why, by teaching, as I do."

"But I never learned how to teach."

"Why, any fairly educated American, with a will and a stock of knowledge, can teach his native tongue to foreigners."

"But how can I get a situation?"

"Easily; all you have to do is to state your qualifications to the proprietor of a bureau de placement—I can recommend you to one—and he will soon find you a position as *professeur d'anglais et d'allemand* in some school here or *en province*. Such men as you are not to be had here every day; for native teachers of English are at a premium."

I followed his advice, and found he was right. All employment agencies in France are under government oversight, and no undue advantage of applicants for situations is ever taken. In a few days I was flying by rail across the country to a school in a manufac-

turing town in the north of France, where I began my career as a teacher. There were 200 boys, 85 pensionnaires and 115 externes, or day-boys. The salary was small, but I had good board and lodging, very few lessons, and abundance of time for study and observation. But perhaps the most valuable part of my education here was obtained in this wise: I had half a dozen private scholars in the town, one of whom was a young gentleman of independent fortune, another a rising young advocate, and a third an active young manufacturer; and my intercourse and conversation with these gentlemen proved exceedingly valuable to me. For it was while talking with and teaching English and German to these gentlemen, who treated me as an equal—in no part of Europe is there such a democratic spirit as in France—that I got rid of that depressed or slavish feeling, that feeling of inferiority or subordinacy which was drilled into me during my thirteen years of bondage as a workman under tyrannical bosses and foremen. Here I found myself; for it was during the daily intercourse with these gentlemen that I first got a glimpse of my own powers, and I never lost confidence in myself after that. I think I learned quite as much here as Miss Bronté learned in the school at Brussels, and I am only sorry that I cannot display this knowledge as she did in "The Professor" and in "Villette."

I suppose most men could, if they would, tell something equally remarkable, in their personal experience, through an accidental meeting with a stranger.

Awkward things sometimes happen in these encounters between strangers. An Englishman, who had just

returned from a trip to Holland, was asked by a stranger what he thought of that country. "Well," said he, "I think with Voltaire, who exclaimed on leaving the country:

"Adieu, canards, canaux, canaille!"

"Do you know," said the stranger, who happened to be a Dutchman, "what Voltaire said of the English?" "No; what was it?" "Something perfectly true," he replied. "It is this: 'Les Anglais out toute la dureté de leur acier, sans le poli!'" This was tit for tat; and no doubt the Englishman felt it, but had he known a little more of Voltaire he might have come off victorious; for Voltaire declared on another occasion, "Si je pourrais avoir choisi le pays de ma naissance, j'aurais choisi l'Angleterre" ("if I could have chosen the place of my birth, I would have chosen England").

Mr. G. W. Smalley tells a good story concerning a meeting between an Englishman and a Scotchman in a railway train. I am obliged to tell the story from memory. An English clergyman had got into an interesting conversation with a stranger in a railway train bound from the Highlands of Scotland to Edinburgh. The stranger, who was clad in hunting costume, fresh from a grouse-hunting expedition in the Highlands, displayed such remarkable skill and address in conversation, such extensive knowledge and rare powers of expression, that the clergyman was de-

lighted with him, and was about inviting him to dinner at his home when he bethought him of the stranger's costume. Being a person of some dignity in the Church, and his wife somewhat of a stickler for etiquette, he hesitated to invite a gentleman in hunting garb to dinner, which hesitation he frankly communicated to the stranger. The latter smiled blandly, but said nothing. The talk went on; and the clergyman was more and more delighted with the elegant and entertaining conversation of his unknown companion. When the train arrived at its destination, they exchanged cards; and the clergyman, after getting into his carriage, looked at the card of the stranger, and found on it the name of the Duke of Argyle!

Everybody has heard of Bass's Burton ale; but not everybody knows that the brewer of the same was made a lord, and is now known as Lord Burton. The following amusing story of his lordship's meeting with a stranger will not be amiss here. While travelling in Scotland, a fellow-passenger engaged Lord Burton in conversation on the subject of brewing. Finding his lordship well posted on the subject, the stranger observed:

"Look here, my friend, you seem to know a good deal about brewing. I am a brewer down Brighton way. I want an active and promising man to act as manager under me and to push the business. I have no family, and if he does well there is a partnership ahead in the future. Now, is that a good offer?"

"An excellent one," replied Lord Burton, "and I am only sorry that I cannot avail myself of it. The fact is, my name is Bass, and I have a little brewery of my own down Burton way which demands all my attention."

Here is another Scotch anecdote which is worth telling. A clergyman having struck up an acquaintance with a young man in a railway train, asked him where he came from. "Edinburgh," he replied. "Edinburgh!" said the clergyman; "so do I. What trade do you follow?" "I am a coupler." "Oh," said the clergyman, "that's very strange. So am I." "You may be that," said the young man, "but I think I have the advantage o' ye." "How so?" asked the clergyman. "Because you can only couple on; but I can couple aff as weel!"

CHAPTER XIX

MEN OF ADDRESS IN CONVERSATION

"Give a boy address and accomplishments, and you give him the mastery of palaces and fortunes. Wherever he goes, he has not the trouble of earning or owning them; they solicit him to enter and possess."—*Emerson.*

Lord Chesterfield, who knew the Duke of Marlborough well, tells us that although the duke was a man of little or no literary culture—in fact he could hardly spell common words correctly—he had such a gracious manner and winning way in conversation, that he gained all hearts, and scored as many victories as a diplomatist as he did as a general. On one occasion, the Council of the Estates General in Holland had nearly come to the conclusion, under the influence of the French ambassador, of siding with France against England in a war about to be undertaken; when Marlborough, who had been unavoidably detained from the meeting, arrived. He had not been half an hour among the Councillors, when, by his captivating manner and persuasive words, he turned the tide of feeling completely in favour of England, and won an ally for his country where otherwise she would have had an enemy!

This persuasive power in conversation, this quality which we call address, is, I imagine, a thing that can hardly be acquired; it must be born with one. Yet, nevertheless, I am positive that by study, observation and practice it is a thing which one may imitate so well as to make it almost natural. By seeing how others succeed, we naturally come to adopt something of their ways; and habit becomes second nature. Besides, the man who is not constantly seeking after a wider development of his intellectual powers has nothing of the elements of success in him, and never will succeed in anything.

Some of the methods of men of address are very simple, and may be copied by any one. I have heard of one great man, noted for his fascinating manner and his power of making friends wherever he went, who always took care to remember the name of every person to whom he was introduced, and to show that he remembered it. How well he knew human nature! For there is nothing more flattering to an ordinary mortal than to be remembered and addressed by name by a distinguished man.

Remember, it is far easier to recall the face of a person than to remember his name. I have already spoken of the remarkable power of Henry Clay in this respect, which was one of the secrets of his success; and his example has been followed by many others. I imagine that William, Earl of Nassau, of whom it is recorded that "he won a subject from the King of

Spain every time he took off his hat," must have been a man of this stamp. I don't think it is a great memory that is required, but close attention to the people introduced, as a matter of business.

Of that very able and highly polished gentleman, Cardinal Manning, Mr. Justin McCarthy says:

> Unlike some other great men whom I have known, he had a wonderful eye and memory for faces. He seemed never to forget any one who had even in the most rapid way been presented to him. We all know how we poor mediocrities are frequently disappointed and vexed because some eminent person whom we have already met several times appears to have forgotten all about us when we come in his way again; . . . but with the Cardinal there was instant recognition, there was a complete recollection of the name and the individuality and the merits of poor expectant mediocrity.

Is it any wonder such a man made many friends and gained a high position in the Church? But another evidence of his wisdom and tact is afforded in these words:

> The Cardinal could talk of anything . . . and one of the charms of his conversation was to be found in the fact that he had a quick and keen perception of character, and that a slight touch of the satirical occasionally gave freshness and life to his remarks.

Few men, however skilful or able, are beyond learning something by the example of others, or by the rules

and precepts set down and followed by them. Even Dr. Johnson, who was famous for his natural powers as a converser, tried to profit by certain rules of conversation set down by other good talkers. One of these was the following by Lord Bacon: "In all kinds of speech, whether pleasant, grave, severe, or ordinary, it is convenient to speak leisurely, and rather slowly than hastily; for hasty speech confounds memory, and oftentimes, besides the unseemliness, drives a man either to stammering, a non-plus, or to harping on that which should follow; whereas a slow speech confirmeth the memory, addeth a conceit of wisdom to the hearer, besides a seemliness of speech and countenance to the speaker."

This precept, good as it is for conversation, is still better, I imagine, for a public address. When Sir Joshua Reynolds asked Dr. Johnson by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language, he replied that "he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion and in every company; to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could command; and that, by constant practice, and not suffering any careless expressions to escape him, he had made good language habitual to him." Thus we see that his power as a talker was, to a large extent, acquired.

But I wish to give a practical example of the way in which a man of address may make a friend of an enemy; nay, of how he may turn a bitter hater into an

admirer and benefactor. I refer to the first interview between John Wilkes and Samuel Johnson, as reported by Boswell, which forms one of the best-told and most interesting chapters in Boswell's famous biography of Johnson. Let the reader remember that Johnson was an uncompromising Churchman and bigoted Tory, while Wilkes was a Free-thinker in religion and a Radical in politics; that both were active promoters of the views entertained by each; and that each had bitterly attacked the other in the public prints. Let him remember that Wilkes had lost his teeth, squinted and lisped, and suffered from an ill reputation. Then he may conceive what address, what skill in conversation, he must have displayed to gain the favour and friendship of such a man as Johnson. Even Lord Mansfield, who was no friend of Radicals and Free-thinkers, spoke of Wilkes, after meeting him at a dinner at Mr. Strachan's, as "the pleasantest companion and the politest gentleman he had ever known."

Of the skilful manner in which Boswell brought them together, which I also quote, Burke declared "there was nothing equal to it in the whole history of the Corps Diplomatique." The way the two were introduced is about as good an example of skilful address as that displayed by Wilkes himself in his interview with the Great Bear of literature. Here it is:

I conceived an irresistible wish to bring, if possible, Dr. Johnson and Mr. Wilkes together. How to manage it was a nice and difficult matter. My worthy

booksellers and friends, Messrs. Dilly in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had invited me to meet Mr. Wilkes and some other gentlemen on Wednesday, May 15th. "Pray," said I, "let us have Dr. Johnson." "What, with Mr. Wilkes? Not for the world," said Mr. Edward Dilly; "Dr. Johnson would never forgive me." "Come," said I, "if you'll let me negotiate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well." "Nay, if you will take it upon you," he replied, "I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here."

Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr. Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I would gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, "Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?" he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, "Dine with Jack Wilkes, sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch!" I, therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house one evening, took occasion to open my plan, thus:

"Mr. Dilly, sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland."

Johnson. Sir, I am obliged to Mr. Dilly. I shall wait upon him.

Boswell. Provided, sir, I suppose, that the company he is to have be agreeable to you?

Johnson. What do you mean, sir? What do you

take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?

Boswell. I beg your pardon, sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of what he calls his patriotic friends with him.

Johnson. Well, sir, and what then? What care *I* for his patriotic friends? Poh!

Boswell. I should not be surprised to find Jack Wilkes there.

Johnson. And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me*, sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but, really, it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally.

Boswell. Pray, forgive me, sir; I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me.

Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would be very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed. . . .

When we entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, Dr. Johnson found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr. Dilly:

"Who is that gentleman, sir?"

"Mr. Arthur Lee, sir."

Johnson. Too, too, too (under his breath), which was one of his habitual mutterings.

Mr. Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot*, but an *Ameri-*

can (a rebel). He was afterwards Minister from the United States at the court of Madrid.

"And who is the gentleman in lace?"

"Mr. Wilkes, sir."

This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself; and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and read, or at least kept his eyes upon the book intently for some time, till he composed himself. His feelings, I dare say, were awkward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company; and he, therefore, resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

The cheering sound of "Dinner is upon the table" dissolved his reverie, and we all sat down without any symptom of ill humour. There were present, besides Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Arthur Lee, who was an old companion of mine when he studied physic at Edinburgh, Mr. (now Sir John) Miller, Dr. Lettson, and Mr. Slater, the druggist. Mr. Wilkes placed himself next to Dr. Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness, that he gained upon him insensibly. No man ate more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr. Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. "Pray, give me leave, sir. It is better here. A little of the brown. Some fat, sir. A little of the stuffing. Some gravy. Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter. Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange—or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest." "Sir, sir, I am obliged to you, sir," cried

Johnson, bowing and turning his head to him with a look for some time of "surly virtue," but, in a short while, of complacency.

Foote being mentioned, Johnson said: "He is not a good mimic."

One of the company added, "A merry-andrew, a buffoon."

Johnson. But he has wit, too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading; he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he has in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, sir, when you think you have got him—like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. Garrick is under many restraints from which Foote is free."

Wilkes. Garrick's wit is more like Lord Chesterfield's.

Johnson. The first time I was in company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him. But the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, sir, he was irresistible. He, upon one occasion, experienced in an extraordinary degree the efficacy of his powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring

customers amongst his numerous acquaintance. Fitzherbert was one who took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid to offend their master, who they knew liked Foote as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favourite, to be their deputy and deliver their remonstrance; and, having invested him with the whole authority of the kitchen, he was to inform Mr. Fitzherbert, in all their names, upon a certain day, that they would drink Foote's small-beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted at Foote's stories and merriment and grimace, that when he went downstairs he told the servants: "This is the finest man I have ever seen—I will not deliver your message—I will drink his small-beer."

And so the conversation went on for hours, the politician bringing out the philosopher more and more, with constantly increasing good humour, and the author excelling himself in good-natured remarks. How carefully Wilkes abstained from touching any inharmonious subject! how well he knew how to turn the conversation on those things on which they both agreed! There is where he displayed that tact which conquers where even genius fails. Wilkes finally made the doctor think so much of him that he became his fast friend, sent him a complete copy of the "Lives of the Poets," and spoke of him as "a scholar, with the manners of a gentleman." That day he went home

and told Mrs. Williams "how much he had been pleased with Wilkes's company, and what an agreeable day he had passed."

Now, as an offset to this, let me mention Adam Smith's encounter with Johnson, and show how differently the philosopher acted as compared with the man of the world. Dr. Smith, who was a far more learned man than Wilkes, lost his head at once, and made a bitter enemy where he might have made a useful friend. A man may be a profound thinker and logician, and yet be utterly lacking in anything like tact or address in conversation. Johnson, who was introduced to Dr. Smith in the street, expressed some doubt, after the first few words of greeting, as to the strict accuracy of Dr. Smith's account of the last illness of David Hume—that is, as to all that was said and done by the famous infidel during his last illness. Dr. Smith stoutly maintained that his account was strictly accurate in every particular; whereupon Johnson became angry, and called Smith a liar; and the latter retorted by calling Johnson a son of a—very bad person! And so they parted. This was the first and last interview of the two most learned men of the day!

Another tactless man is he who fails to catch the note of the company in which he finds himself. To be serious among gay people, or gay among serious people, is tactless. But, above all, to be unable to perceive where long speeches are out of order, or where

weighty information is not in place, is pre-eminently tactless. Mr. G. W. Smalley, after showing that the talk of good society in London is no longer the same as it was forty years ago, when Macaulay and others talked for hours on a stretch, but that all is said in a light, easy, rapid, and crisp way, with no other aim than entertainment and pleasant interchange of thought, gives a very graphic picture of the young gentleman from abroad, say, from the banks of the Congo or from South Africa, who, finding himself at a fashionable party, tries, wherever he can, to get off the weighty things he has learned in his travels.

He is a cultivated, an accomplished man; but not quite what is here understood as a man of the world. He belongs, in fact, to that same past generation which had so heavy a hand or such a genius for getting to the bottom of a subject; and sometimes staying there. He is asked to an evening party. He goes correctly attired and bent on conquest. He is not content with the silent bow, or the word or two of commonplace greeting to his hostess, which here are thought sufficient. He comes to a dead halt at the top of the staircase; sets forth in elegant language his pleasure at seeing her, his pleasure at being asked, the pleasure he expects from seeing so many pleasant people, his pleasure at having quite unexpectedly found the English so civil to the tribes of Central or South Africa. Long before he has finished, the pressure of guests arriving behind him has carried him on into the middle of the drawing-room, and the compliment which he began to his hostess is completed in

the ear of a stranger. His friend introduces him to the stranger, a woman of the world, and of the London world. She receives him precisely as she receives nine-tenths of her acquaintances. Perhaps she even shakes hands with him, seeing that he expects it; then, after two or three of those vapid sentences which do duty for conversation in such a crush, turns to a newcomer. Our friend from the Congo thinks she does not care for conversation, and, if he be sensitive, that she does not care for him. Again he is introduced; and again the English lady, young or old, does her best to be civil to him; but her civilities, too, are of the same fleeting kind. It does not occur to her that this dark cousin from over the sea expects to exchange opinions with her on the Irish question, or to extract a full account of her views on the correlation of forces. She also turns away; and after one or two more such experiences, he announces sadly that he is not a success in London society. He has not caught the note—that is all.

Although this "dark cousin over the sea" may possibly veil some Western or Southern American whom Mr. Smalley had in his eye, the picture is piquant enough, especially to a Bostonian; though I have no doubt the same man may sometimes be seen even in Fifth Avenue society. Mr. Smalley says of the conversation of the London society to-day:

Topics are treated lightly and, above all, briefly. If you want to preach a sermon, you must get into a pulpit or a newspaper; preach it at table you cannot. You may tell a story, but you must, in Hayward's phrase, cut it to the bone. If you do not cut it short,

you will be cut into and before you are half way through; another man will have begun and finished his, and your audience will have gone over to the enemy.

This, however, looks very much like a description of what we here call "the smart set," who are by no means to be reckoned among the most cultivating or ennobling of talkers in this country. However, the description is well worth noting, especially by prosy talkers. And as for the young man fresh from Oregon or the Klondike, he may also keep the description in mind.

CHAPTER XX

A SPECIMEN CONVERSATION, SHOWING WHAT MAY BE LEARNED IN HALF AN HOUR'S TALK

THERE has appeared in the New York *Critic* a series of "Real Conversations" between well-known people, one of which, by the kindness of the editor, I am permitted to quote. It is between Mr. William Archer, the dramatic critic, and Mr. William Heinemann, the London publisher, and I am sure the intelligent reader will find it interesting as well as instructive. The interview is supposed to take place in a garden on the seaboard of the Roman Campagna, sloping to the Mediterranean, in the winter of 1902. On the entrance of Mr. Heinemann, Mr. Archer is discovered reading:

Mr. Heinemann. Good morning. Don't you find the sun rather hot there?

W. A. I was just thinking I should have to move.

Mr. Heinemann. Come and sit here in the shade. . . . What a glorious morning!

W. A. There's no trace of those islands—what do you call them?

Mr. Heinemann. The Pontine Islands.

W. A. There is no sign of them on the horizon.

Mr. Heinemann. That means steady fine weather. When the islands are visible, rain is not far off.

W. A. And meanwhile in England . . .

Mr. Heinemann. I have letters this morning—frost, fog, sleet, slush, every possible abomination.

W. A. I don't wonder that people don't read books in such a climate as this.

Mr. Heinemann. But you were reading when I came!

W. A. Only a bad habit contracted by my ancestors in centuries of Scotch mists. I can't shake it off, even here. Confess, now, that you wouldn't like to be a publisher in the land of the *dolce far niente* (sweet doing nothing).

Mr. Heinemann. Oh, there's no confessing about it. Reading is naturally an indoor employment, and the climate that tends to keep people indoors tends, other things being equal, to beget a nation of readers. But even the English climate has its drawbacks. From the point of view of the book-trade, the *far troppo* (doing too much) is as bad as the *far niente* (doing nothing). Not to mention the rush of business that leaves men no time for reading, just think how much of the average Englishman's leisure time and spare cash goes to outdoor sports!

W. A. Then what is your general feeling as to the state of the book-market in England? Are things, on the whole, getting better or worse?

Mr. Heinemann. Undoubtedly better—very distinctly better. Of course, we have great difficulties to contend with, but we are gradually overcoming them.

W. A. Difficulties? Such as——?

Mr. Heinemann. Well, there are many; but the fundamental difficulty is, of course, in a crowded market, to get books shown and seen. This some of us are meeting by the gradual introduction and adapta-

tion of the Continental system of supplying books to the booksellers "on sale." It is my own practice, for instance, in the case of almost all books, except novels, to allow any bookseller whom we know to be trustworthy to have copies of whatever books he wants "on sale or return."

W. A. And you find the plan answers?

Mr. Heinemann. Most certainly. It is the only way of enabling the majority of books of the better class to get at their public.

W. A. What about wear and tear and depreciation of the stock you issue in this way?

Mr. Heinemann. Of course, that is an item that has to be allowed for. The English custom of binding all books before publication stands a little in the way of this system. A German or French paper-covered book, if it gets soiled or faded in the bookseller's shop, can be re-covered for a fraction of a farthing; whereas in England it may cost ninepence, or a shilling, or more, to re-bind a shop-soiled book. That is only one of several drawbacks to the system that conservative members of the Publishers' Association enlarge upon. I admit all these drawbacks, fully, freely. But I say that the greatest drawback of all is to fail to sell your books.

W. A. You had a good deal to do with the founding of the Publishers' Association, had you not?

Mr. Heinemann. Yes, I believe I may call myself one of the prime movers in that matter.

W. A. And of course, having to deal with Englishmen of business, you found plenty of opposition—plenty of sheer stick-in-the-mud inertia—to be overcome?

Mr. Heinemann. Something of that, yes. But I

also found ready and intelligent support. And, as a matter of fact, the Publishers' Association, though only six years old, is a great success, and has already done wonderful work.

W. A. To the outsider, it certainly seems to stand to reason that publishers ought to organise themselves for concerted action—just as doctors, barristers, solicitors, even authors and actors, do.

Mr. Heinemann. As you say, it stands to reason. But the thing that stands to reason is precisely the thing that the mind of the majority is slowest to accept.

W. A. Yes, I suppose we English have an hereditary bias towards methods of unreason. What, then, should you say was the special function of the Publishers' Association?

Mr. Heinemann. Broadly speaking, its function is to educate the booksellers. You may think it a paradox, but it's not far from the literal truth, that many booksellers in England never see a book of any value or importance, but live entirely by peddling novels, old and new. The book-trade will never be in a thoroughly healthy condition until we have a body of selected and trained booksellers all over the country, to whom we give depots of books on sale, and say to them: "Now, sell these—don't merely wait till people come to buy them, but *sell* them—that is your business!" A bookseller who really knew his business—I am speaking especially of the country and suburban trade—would never bother about the chance customers who came to his shop.

W. A. Hallo! isn't that going rather too far?

Mr. Heinemann. Oh, don't misunderstand me. He would see that the people who came to his shop had all

possible attention, and a great deal more intelligent attention than they receive at present. What I mean is, that he would regard them as the accidents and accessories of his business, the main part of which would be the fostering and supplying of a steady demand among regular customers, many of whom might not come to his shop twice in the year.

W. A. Then how would he get at them?

Mr. Heinemann. In various ways. Largely through prospectuses and circulars—of the skilled use of which the English bookseller has as yet no idea. But in many cases he would put the actual books before the people who he knew would be likely to want them. Look at our scores of large towns inhabited mainly by people of means and leisure—who ought to be the backbone of the reading public—and you will find that there the bookselling trade is conducted with incredible negligence and stupidity. Ask a bookseller in Brighton, or Bath, or Hastings, whether he has even a list of possible customers for special professional books, and he will tell you that he has never thought of keeping one. But every German bookseller, for instance, has not only a list, but a carefully classified list, of his *clientèle*, and can tell at a glance how many he can rely upon to buy this book, how many to buy that. To take an obvious example, he knows that such and such a doctor is a throat specialist: he sends to his house, without waiting for an order, a new book on diseases of the larynx; and if the doctor doesn't want it, he fetches it away again in a day or two. Another doctor is a chest specialist: to him he sends a book on the Nordrach open-air cure—and so forth.

W. A. But don't you think that people in England

would be apt to be rather irritated by this system of "pushfulness"?

Mr. Heinemann. Certainly, if it were not applied with intelligence and tact. But bookselling ought to be a skilled, and a highly skilled, employment—that is precisely the point I am insisting on. You, I dare say, collect books on the drama?

W. A. Yes, in a very modest way.

Mr. Heinemann. Well, if I deluge you with prospectuses of books on horse-racing or bimetallism, you think me a fool, and throw my circulars into the waste-paper basket, with comments to that effect. But I don't suppose you would be irritated if I sent you a prospectus of a book, say, on the French stage—or, even for inspection, the book itself?

W. A. I should probably call down on you the curse appointed for those who lead us into temptation—but I should very likely succumb.

Mr. Heinemann. The long and the short of it is, the bookseller should not be a mere penny-in-the-slot machine, but an intelligent intermediary between the publisher and the reading public. That is why I am utterly opposed to the mixing up of bookselling with other trades, and will always move heaven and earth to check the tendency.

W. A. Yes, I can see the importance of what you say. It would certainly be an immense advantage to literature, and indeed to the intellectual machinery of the nation as a whole, if booksellers as a class were educated men who took an intelligent interest in their calling. But what is the chance of attracting such men to the business?

Mr. Heinemann. To an intelligent man, is there any branch of commerce that ought to be more attractive?

Why, in Germany even the assistants in a bookseller's shop are men of education, often university men. Bookselling is there regarded as one of the liberal professions. And why should it not be? Last year I attended the Congress of Booksellers and Publishers at Leipzig. There were four hundred representatives present from every part of Germany; and a lady of exceptional insight who was present at some of the sittings remarked that it was very seldom you saw in any public body so many notably intelligent physiognomies.

W. A. Speaking of Germany, I wish you would explain a matter that has always puzzled me. Who finances the enormous scientific and philological literature of Germany? The press teems with long and learned treatises, the mere type-setting of which must cost considerable sums, and which cannot possibly have a large sale. Can you explain to me how this vast literature is kept a-going?

Mr. Heinemann. Yes, I can—by the scientific organisation of the book-trade. Of course, there are other things to be taken into account. In the first place, Germany abounds in small "endowments of research." It swarms with professors and "docents," each with his small salaried post, living with a frugality incredible to an Englishman of similar status, and devoting his life to his *Fach*, his special study, out of sheer love of it. It is these men that write the books you speak of.

W. A. Oh, yes, I quite understand how they come to be written; it is the fact of their ever getting printed and published that puzzles me.

Mr. Heinemann. Well, of course the cost of manufacture is somewhat less in Germany than in England.

But that isn't the real secret. It is, as I say, the scientific organisation of the book-trade. You see, the men that write these books also read and must possess these books. Each of them must have the books of his own special study—they are the tools of his trade. Well, the booksellers know this; and, all over the country, they know how to get at these men with the greatest certainty and the least expense. You know how many specialist magazines there are in Germany—*archiv* for this, that, and the other thing. Why, there are two or three in connection with English literature alone—*Angelsachsische Studien, Englische Studien,* and so forth. Each of these will have its constant body of subscribers, and the subscribers to the magazines may be confidently reckoned upon to buy the books appertaining to the same study, which are often merely the overflow from the magazines—treatises too long for insertion. Then there are a great number of university libraries and similar institutions, which must have all scientific publications. Thus the sale of one of these learned works can be foretold almost to a copy. And remember that there are no advertising expenses to be reckoned with. Literary advertisements are almost unknown in Germany, except in the case of big productions, such as a popular encyclopædia. For most books only one advertisement is needed—in the *Buchhändler Börsenblatt.* This paper is read conscientiously every morning by every bookseller throughout the length and breadth of Germany; and, knowing his *clientèle* to a nicety, he knows almost to a nicety how many copies of any given book he must write for.*

*The following figures, from the *Publishers' Weekly,* showing the output of books for 1903, will strongly confirm

W. A. Then it seems to me that newspaper proprietors ought to pray night and morning that the English book-trade may never be "scientifically organised" on the German model. What would the poor newspapers do without the publishers' advertisements? But, not being a newspaper proprietor, I am bound to admit that our system of advertising, in literature as in other things—but more especially in literature—strikes me as gigantically and foolishly wasteful. It is like firing volleys in the dark and without definite aim. For every bullet that finds its billet—for every advertisement that catches the eye predestined for it, and awakens a desire to buy and read—a thousand must go hopelessly astray and spend themselves in vain.

Mr. Heinemann. Oh, not quite so bad as that, I hope. In fact, an advertisement—though the bad organisation of our book-trade forces us to rely too much upon it—is extraordinarily effective in selling a book. Of course, no one who knows his business advertises at random. There is art in that as in everything else. We may not aim at the individual reader, but we can aim pretty accurately at a class. Like the gunners of the *Scuola d'Artiglieria*, we can calculate our range and drop our shells with tolerable precision, even over an "unseen target." Of course, there is a great deal, too, in the choice of the weapon—the particular paper we select in order to get at a particular section of the public.

Mr. Heinemann's statements: Books and pamphlets published in Germany, 26,906; in France, 12,199; in Great Britain, 7,381; in the United States, 7,833. The Germans are the largest book publishers in the world.

W. A. Which has the greater influence on the fortunes of a book—the reviews or the advertisements?

Mr. Heinemann. The advertisements, most emphatically. The glory of reviewing is departed; it is not at all what it used to be. I don't mean to say that it is less able. I think, on the contrary, that the average ability of reviewers is steadily rising. But for some reason or other the review has ceased to bite on the public mind as it used to. The days are past when a single article in the *Times* or the *Spectator* could make the fortune of a book. These romantic incidents don't occur nowadays. Our reviewers are excellent critics, but for some reason or other they don't excite such interest in the books they deal with as the reviewers of the past seem to have excited.

W. A. Is not that because no single paper is nowadays regarded with the devout and childlike faith which the last generation used to accord to its two or three great oracles? But surely, though no individual paper may have the influence it once had, you must underrate the general influence of reviews on the sale of a book. For myself, though I am a little behind the scenes in reviewing, and know very well that reviewers are human and fallible, yet I am often influenced by a review either to buy a book or to order it at the library.

Mr. Heinemann. Perhaps; but how much oftener do you feel that you have got out of a review all that you want to know about a book, and need not trouble about it any further? The function of the literary weekly, or the literary page of the daily paper, is largely to give people a superficial acquaintance with current literature, while saving them the expense of book-buying and the time involved in book-reading. I

really do not know why we publishers support—as we do, almost entirely—the literary weeklies. They are of no proportionate service to us, either as organs of criticism or as mediums of advertising—except, perhaps, those that are practically trade organs, in which capacity they fulfil some of the functions of the *Buchhändler Börsenblatt*.

W. A. Then they are not the weapons you rely upon in bombarding the reading public?

Mr. Heinemann. Most decidedly not. If they are effective organs of publicity at all, it is only in the case of a very special class of books. For getting at the great reading public, the popular newspaper is alone effective. But it is so effective that well-directed advertising will often counteract the harm done by the most damaging review, even in the most influential paper—I mean, of course, if the book has any real element of attraction in it.

W. A. But reviews, I presume, are useful for quoting in advertisements?

Mr. Heinemann. Yes, that is effective, if skilfully done.

W. A. Rather a large "if." I am often struck with what seems to me the extraordinary stupidity with which "Opinions of the Press" are selected.

Mr. Heinemann. No doubt they are often carelessly compiled by unintelligent subordinates. But you must remember, too, that in the case of many books they are intended to appeal to readers of a very different class from yourself. You are, as you say, behind the scenes, and consequently in a position to discount a good deal that the man in the street will take for gospel.

W. A. Tell me, then, about the man in the street.

As you take, on the whole, a hopeful view of the book-trade, I suppose I may assume that you think the average intelligence of the man in the street is looking up?

Mr. Heinemann. I don't know that that assumption is quite logical. Improvement in the book-trade would not necessarily imply improvement in public intelligence. There is an unintelligent as well as an intelligent reading public, and it might quite well happen that the book-trade was flourishing mainly through its appeal to the lower, and not the higher, class. But as a matter of fact, I don't think this is the case. The intelligence of the middle and lower-middle classes in the matter of book-buying is, on the whole, improving. I don't know that I can say as much for the wealthier classes. Many a man, where his father would have spent a pound in books, will now spend a guinea on an opera stall, and sixpence on a magazine.

W. A. I fancy the fashion of collecting books—forming libraries of handsome, well-bound editions—has gone out a good deal.

Mr. Heinemann. Yes; but, on the other hand, people of moderate means have now much more encouragement than they had a generation ago to form their own little libraries. Look how execrable was the manufacture of books during all the middle years of the last century, from the days of the Pickerings down to our own times! A reasonably attractive edition of a classical author was scarcely to be had for love or money. Now—within the last fifteen years or so—the improvement has been enormous. Dent and other publishers have done excellent service to literature and to the book-trade by their delightful editions of the classics. I can speak without egoism on this

subject, for I have done nothing myself in the way of classical reprints: the literature of the day has always interested me more. But I greatly value the work done by others in this direction. It is not only good in itself—it helps current literature, as well, by enabling people, at a reasonable expenditure, to form the nucleus of a handsome and attractive private library. I am afraid I must admit that a good many people buy the Shakespeares and Scotts and Macaulays, with which the press teems, rather as furniture than as literature.

W. A. Like the lady who always bought books that were bound in red—it was such a nice warm colour for a room!

Mr. Heinemann. No doubt some such motive prevails in some cases. But books, after all, are a heavy and expensive form of wall-paper. I think we may take it that most book-buyers buy to read; and I believe that the number who buy intelligently to read intelligently is increasing year by year.

W. A. It is pleasant to hear any one, in these days, talking optimistically. What do you say, then, to the sixpenny edition—the book that is bought to be skimmed and thrown away? You are not one of those who think that it is ruining literature?

Mr. Heinemann. The sixpenny edition—this is nothing new I am telling you—is simply the publishers' measure of self-defence against the cheap magazine. It ranks with periodicals rather than with books. The work published in sixpenny editions is probably, on the average, better than the matter supplied in the cheap magazines; and anything that tends to beget and foster the habit of reading—be it sixpenny editions, circulating libraries, public libraries,

or what not—is, in the long run, good. The reading habit is like the opium habit: once acquired, it cannot be shaken off.

W. A. I'm afraid that as regards scrap papers and the literature of snippets, your simile is only too just. It is a narcotic to thought, an opiate to intelligence. For my part, I welcome the sixpenny edition, because it seems to me that it must in some measure compete, not only with the cheap magazine, but with the penny patchwork and halfpenny rag-bag. Any reading that requires a continuous effort of attention is better than the idle nibbling at odds and ends that passes for reading with so many people. Do you find that the average life of a book—even of a successful book—is falling off?

Mr. Heinemann. Most certainly it is. If you come to think of it, how could it be otherwise? We live so much faster now, year by year; and the claims on our attention are so increasingly numerous and urgent. Even within my own experience of eighteen years or so, I find one book elbow another out much more rapidly than it used to.

W. A. Then does a successful book live an intenser life in the short span allotted to it?

Mr. Heinemann. Intenser? Well, I don't know how you would measure intensity. But of course there is always a steadily growing public to appeal to—not only owing to actual increase of population, but owing to the spread of education. Remember, it is only a little over thirty years since the first Education Act was passed.

W. A. Then, apart from temporary disturbances of the market, such as that caused by the war, should you say that the average sale of a successful novel

was greater to-day than it used to be twenty years ago?

Mr. Heinemann. The comparison is very difficult to make, for in those days, of course, the three-volume novel, costing nominally a guinea and a half, held the field. But I think one may say with tolerable confidence that a successful novel has nowadays far more readers in the first three or four months of its life than it had then.

W. A. If, then, there is small hope of longevity for a modern book, does that affect your policy in the choice of matter for publication? Since the percentage of books that can be expected to make a permanent success is small, and becoming smaller, do you relinquish the search for such books, and look out rather for those that are likely to make a temporary sensation before they sink into oblivion—pamphlet-books, or, as Ruskin used to say, mere supplements to the daily newspaper?

Mr. Heinemann. Oh, no; that would be the most short-sighted policy. Every publisher will tell you that the books he really wants are what the French call *livres de fond*—books that are in steady, continuous demand.

W. A. And even among novels such books are still to be found, eh? Now, without going into individual instances, or in any way trespassing on delicate ground, what sort of novel commands the largest and steadiest sale?

Mr. Heinemann. Without doubt the story—the well-told story. From the point of view of enduring popularity, give me the writer who can "spin a good yarn." Look, for instance, at the steady vogue of Miss Braddon! The smart society novel, and the moral or

religious tract, may set people talking for a month or so, and have a large sale; but they very soon drop out and are forgotten.

W. A. And can you tell me if this shortness of life is characteristic of the American novel? One hears every day of gigantic "booms" in American fiction: does one novel drive out its predecessor there, as here? Or is there any novelist who is establishing a permanent popularity, like that of Dickens or Thackeray, or even of our second-rate nineteenth-century men, Reade, Kingsley, or Trollope?

Mr. Heinemann. I don't hear of any—I wish I did. Many of their huge successes, especially in so-called historical romance, are even worse trash than the things the public devours on this side.

W. A. Do you take the same encouraging view of the American book-trade that you do of the English? I presume the conditions are very similar.

Mr. Heinemann. Well, the American publishers have one great disadvantage to contend against, and one great advantage on their side. The disadvantage lies in the fact that so much of the retail trade has fallen into the hands of the enormously powerful department stores, where you can buy everything from a shoelace to an edition of Horace.

W. A. I see. You mean that the intervention of these stores—Wanamaker's, Siegel Cooper's, and so forth—prevents the development of a class of skilled specialists in bookselling, such as you think we shall one day have in England?

Mr. Heinemann. Yes. It is certainly not to the advantage of literature that it should reach the public through the medium of the dry-goods store. Spare me the obvious pun!

W. A. Well, then, what is the great advantage that the American publisher enjoys?

Mr. Heinemann. The power of getting direct at a very large public without the intervention of the bookseller at all, through the medium of a properly organised post-office. Do you realise that books and magazines can go through the post in America for one cent a pound, in place of our fourpence, or eight cents, a pound? American publishers do an immense business in this way.

W. A. But a man must hear of a book before he can order it to be posted to him. How do the publishers get at their postal customers? Through circulars? Newspaper advertisements?

Mr. Heinemann. Partly; but especially through the magazines, which are splendid advertising mediums. [The educational publishers send the book itself—as a specimen!] Do you know why the Americans have half a dozen first-rate illustrated magazines, while we have only one—*The Pall Mall?* It is simply because of the facilities for distribution offered by the post-office. I can tell you, we stand greatly in need of another Rowland Hill here in England; but I suppose that sort of man comes only once in a century. Our magazines, such as they are, get at the public through 6,000 retailers, and Smith & Son's 780 bookstalls. Now, why should not the profits of this mechanism of distribution go into the nation's exchequer?

W. A. But do you mean to say that this one-cent rate actually pays the American postal department?

Mr. Heinemann. I can't give you figures on the point; but clearly it wouldn't be continued if it involved a loss. And if it simply covers expenses in America, it could not fail to bring in a large profit in

England, where the distances are so much shorter. But, speaking of the American book-market, there is another point that must not be overlooked—the enormous success of the subscription edition.

W. A. The subscription edition! What does that mean, precisely?

Mr. Heinemann. Why, the special edition of standard books and sets of books got up to be sold by travelling canvassers.

W. A. I know the book-agent is a stock figure in the repertory of the American humourist. So he is really a success, is he?

Mr. Heinemann. Undoubtedly. In thousands and thousands of American houses, especially in country districts, you will find quite a handsome little library, bought from the travelling agents.

W. A. And do the leading publishers sell books in this way?

Mr. Heinemann. Indeed they do—all of them. But not the same editions as they put on the general market. There is always something special about the subscription edition—superior illustrations, or binding, or both.

W. A. Is not the method we have heard so much of recently—the method of selling enormously advertised sets of books on the instalment principle—simply a development of the American "subscription" method?

Mr. Heinemann. Yes, it is; and it might have been a very valuable development, only that, unfortunately, it was discounted by being applied in the first instance to a set of books that nobody really wanted.

W. A. The *Encyclopædia Britannica!* Do you mean to say that all that gigantic advertising was not successful?

Mr. Heinemann. Successful in selling the books? Oh, yes. I have no special information, but I have every reason to believe it was enormously successful. What I mean is that, when people had got the books, they found they didn't want them. They were wholly out of date. The prestige of the *Times* had been indiscreetly used to persuade people to buy an article that was to a great extent useless; and I believe this has made people suspicious of the whole system. Compare the twenty-years-old *Encyclopædia Britannica*, for instance, with Brockhaus's great *Conversations-Lexikon*, which is reprinted and brought up to date every year!

W. A. What! Every year?

Mr. Heinemann. Yes; it runs to sixteen volumes in all, and four volumes are reprinted every three months.

W. A. But you think that if the method of mammoth advertisement had been applied in the first place to a better-chosen publication it would have established itself in popular favour and done good service?

Mr. Heinemann. Yes, I think the method was sound, if only the property had been equally so. And now, if we are to catch the afternoon train for Frascati, I think we had better go in and see about lunch.

W. A. One moment more. I see you have lately been engaged in a controversy on the subject of the literary agent. What, in your view, is the head and front of his offending?

Mr. Heinemann. Oh, I have no special objection to an author's employing an agent, if he thinks it worth while to do so; only I don't see where the advantage comes in. It seems to me that he pays a very large price for a very small service, and often for no service at all.

W. A. But if the author happens to be wholly incompetent in matters of business, it is surely worth his while to pay for expert assistance. There are people—not mere Harold Skimpoles in other respects, I hope—to whom figures convey no meaning whatever. They can no more understand a publisher's contract than they can a Tuscan inscription. If such people have to make their livelihood by selling the books they write, is it not reasonable and natural that they should call in expert assistance?

Mr. Heinemann. By all means! let them employ a solicitor to look after their business interests.

W. A. But, then, a solicitor who has acquired experience of this class of business will become to all intents and purposes a literary agent.

Mr. Heinemann. With this fundamental difference: that the solicitor will transact your business for a stated fee, whereas the literary agent claims a percentage on your profits. It passes my comprehension how any author of the smallest standing can think it to his interest to pay an income-tax of ten per cent., or even of five per cent., to his literary agent. A solicitor would do for five pounds all that an agent does for fifty.

W. A. But what about an agent's special knowledge of the market—where to "place" a book to best advantage, and so forth?

Mr. Heinemann. I assure you that is all nonsense. It must be a very unintelligent author indeed who does not know all that need be known about the market. Remember, I am speaking of the market for books: as regards the "serialising" or "syndicating" of literary matter, the case is different. There, I admit, the agent has his uses, and perhaps also in the

case of an author living at a great distance from his market—in America or Australia. But come along now, or we shall really be late. We can resume the discussion this afternoon, if you like, at "Tusculum, beautiful Tusculum."

W. A. I wonder if Cicero employed a literary agent?

Mr. Heinemann. Not he! He was far too good a man of business.

[*Exeunt ambo.*]

Now, just imagine how differently this conversation might have turned out had Mr. Archer, on hearing of the "fog, frost, sleet, and slush" in England, spoken of the difference of climate and the different condition of the people in the two countries—how that one, with a rough, rainy, cold, foggy climate, has bred a prosperous, intelligent, industrious people, and the other, with a bright, sunny, beautiful climate, has bred a people that are nearly the reverse. And then the causes of all this, the history, the experience of the two races—what a subject for a conversation! It was this subject that gave Lord Macaulay occasion for that striking and brilliant contrast which he draws in his "History of England" between Scotland, with its stern climate and sterile soil, and Italy, with its smiling climate and fertile soil.

PART III

SOME TABLE-TALK NOTES—FUN, FACTS AND FANCIES
—THINGS WISE, WITTY AND COMICAL

"Fragments of this sort may be regarded as literary seed-corn, in which there may be many a barren grain; yet some may sprout."—*Novalis.*

"I believe I have the popular reputation of being a story-teller," said President Lincoln to a deputation who waited upon him; "but I do not deserve the name in its general sense; for it is not the story itself, but its purpose, or effect, that interests me. I often avoid a long and useless discussion by others, or a laborious explanation on my part by a short story that illustrates my point of view. So, too, the sharpness of a refusal or the edge of a rebuke may be blunted by an appropriate story, so as to save wounded feeling and yet serve the purpose."—Reported by Colonel Silas W. Burt in *The Century.*

TABLE-TALK NOTES

"Let it serve for table-talk."—*Shakespeare.*

When I was a young man I used to cut out anything really good and interesting I found in a newspaper or magazine. But I found, after a time, that these things often reappeared in book-form or in pamphlet-form; so I gave it up long ago. But in the last year or two I determined to cut out such things or such incidents as were really interesting, amusing, or instructive for conversation; and I must say that it will go hard if some of these paragraphs do not afford, especially to young persons, material for conversations that will illustrate a point, adorn a tale, or point a moral in any conversation. Nor are such things to be despised. Even Cicero and Lord Bacon made collections of such things, and the great Daniel Webster, who loved to entertain his friends at his hospitable board, "had," says Edward Everett, "a keen sense of the ludicrous, and repeated or listened to a humorous anecdote with infinite glee—he delighted in anecdotes of eminent men, especially of eminent Americans, and his memory was stored with them." But let us begin. Some of the items are my own.

There is an old blind man in New York, whom I have

often helped across the street, whose constant cheerfulness is to me an eloquent sermon. On the last occasion, however, the words he used on greeting me afforded, I thought, a good example of the inveterateness of an every-day phrase even where totally inappropriate. I had not seen him for five or six months and was wondering what had become of him, when suddenly there he stood before me, at the corner of Pearl and Fulton streets, just about to cross the street. Taking him by the arm, I said to him: "Now, John, raise your right foot; step right over the curb, and come along with me." "Why, sir," said he, recognising me at once by my voice, "I am very glad to *see* you: I have not *seen* you for a long time."

Why did he not say "*meet* you," or "*speak* to you?" He used the phrase that everybody uses, and could not get away from it—a good example, I imagine, of the force of example. It reminds me of the old saying, "'I see, I see,' said the blind man, who didn't see at all." Most blind people are said to be cheerful and content. How is this to be explained?

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Apropos of this incident, I heard the other day a bit of romance worth telling. A young lady, whom a gentleman had noticed carefully helping a blind man across the street, was followed by the gentleman and observed by him until he had found means of being introduced to her. The sequel may be imagined: a courtship ensued, which resulted in a happy marriage—a pure love match, for the gentleman was rich and the lady poor. And then—many young ladies were frequently seen helping blind men across the street!

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The taste of sight-seers is peculiar. What some have a horror of, others run to see. I have forgotten who that famous Englishman was who "never missed a hanging," but a taste for this sort of thing seems to be not uncommon among his countrywomen as well. A little English girl was asked by her teacher how she liked things in America, and whether she preferred England. "Indeed I do, ma'am," she replied; "for, you see, in London we lived right opposite the jail, and could see all the hangings!" Perhaps hers was the very house where Lord Tomnoddy fell asleep and "missed all the fun!"

How often the indiscretion of a child makes a curious revelation! A boy, who had been two days absent from school, on being asked why he had been absent, replied, quite naïvely: "Why, sir, a surprise party was coming to our house, and we had to get ready!" That answer is perhaps the most truthful account of a "surprise party" ever given.

Horace Porter tells a better child-story than this. A teacher having asked one of his little scholars what was his father's occupation, was informed he did not like to tell. "Why so, my little man?" "Oh, papa said I shouldn't tell." "Oh, you may tell me; I shall not make any use of it." "Well, sir, he is the *bearded lady* at the museum!"

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It is not always safe to ask serious questions of children. One is apt to get such unexpected answers. A bishop, examining a class, asked, "Which boys go to Heaven?" whereupon a youngster instantly answered, "Dead boys, sir!" A larger boy might have answered, "Boys that die early." On asking, "Who

made you?" none were able to answer; then one little fellow put his hand up. "Well, sir?" "Please, sir, the little boy that God made is not here to-day!"

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Because dogs are said to howl when any one in the neighbourhood is dying, many persons listen to the howling of a dog with superstitious awe; and if any one in the house is ill, they drive the dog away in terror. How is this to be accounted for—that dogs often howl in the presence, or in the neighbourhood, of approaching death? A neighbour of mine—a shrewd old tobacconist, with a wonderfully sharp sense of smell—declares that the dog, by his acute olfactory organs, scents the dead or decaying body before life is extinct! This theory, incredible as it seems, is probably correct. When we recollect what wonderful feats the dog, by his sense of smell, has been known to perform, and how unerringly he leads the way in search of some missing person whom he has known, this theory does not seem altogether improbable; and especially so in the case of a dying person whom the dog has long known and loved in life. It is well known that a dog instantly discerns a friend from an enemy; in fact, he seems to know all those who are friendly to his race. There are few things more touching in the life of Sir Walter Scott than the fact that when he walked in the streets of Edinburgh nearly every dog he met came and fawned on him, wagged his tail at him, and thus showed his recognition of the friend of his race.

Does not this seem to indicate that the canine race have a power even beyond that of human beings? How many of us can thus instinctively tell his friends

from his foes? "There is no art," says Shakespeare, "to find the mind's construction in the face."

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Here is a man whose sense of smell is as keen as that of a dog:

"A London physician of large practice," says an English paper, "asserts that owing to his extremely sensitive sense of smell he can foretell the coming of death forty-eight hours. He says that when a patient comes within two days of death a peculiar earthy smell is emitted from the body. When the fatal disease is slow in its progress the odour makes its appearance as much as three days beforehand; but when the disease is of the galloping kind, the doctor says he receives much shorter warning. He attributes the smell to mortification, which begins within the body before life is extinct."

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We learn by contrast, by observing how different things *are* as compared with what they *were*. This is one of the great advantages of a knowledge of history, which does not now consist, as it formerly did, chiefly of descriptions of the life of camps and courts, of kings and cabinets, but also of the habits and manners of a people. I have never read anything in history that shows so strikingly the manners of a bygone age, and by contrast the progress we have made since then, as the following incident told by Mackenzie, the author of the "Man of Feeling." Mackenzie had been invited to a dinner party, and not being able to stand such huge draughts as the other guests indulged in—which was always regarded as a proof of manliness in that age—he resolved to avail himself of the only

means of escape left to him. Having noticed several of his companions, who had fallen victims to their potations, dropping down under the table, he determined to follow their example before he was compelled to do so. While lying there among the slain, of whom he pretended to be one, his attention was drawn to a small pair of hands working at his throat; and, to the question who it was, a child's voice replied: "Sir, I'm the lad that's to lowse (loosen) the neckcloths!"

Now remember, this was not among the vulgar but among the more cultured class of that day; with whom it was customary, at every dinner party, to appoint one of the household to untie the cravats of those who, helplessly drunk, fell under the table, and were in danger of dying by apoplexy or suffocation!

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There is nothing that illustrates a truth so well as an example; and the truth that all men, even the most obscure, are exerting in their vocation an influence on some one, or of some kind, is well illustrated in the following story. When Napoleon was marching with his great army through the northern part of France, he heard, on a Sunday morning, the ringing of a village church-bell, calling the people to worship. The sound of the bell recalled memories of early days, when he was wont, with his father and mother, brothers and sisters, to walk to church and enjoy the peaceful ministrations of the Sabbath day; and the recollection touched him so deeply that, according to Bourrienne, he shed tears at the remembrance. How little that simple village bell-ringer imagined what an influence he was exerting that day! He had done what the most eloquent orators of the day had never been able to do:

he had touched the great Emperor's heart and brought tears to his eyes.

* * * * *

I don't think it pays to hire an ignorant man, even for the commonest labour. On a bitter cold December morning, I noticed an Irishman driving a wagon, heavily loaded with iron bars, down to the ferry at Hoboken. On getting on the ferry-boat, I noticed that he had driven his horse and wagon right up to the front of the boat, and that the animal, steaming hot and covered with perspiration, was exposed to the stinging blast then blowing from the north.

"That horse will get his death, if you don't cover him," I said. "Have you no blanket to cover him? Don't you see the animal is in a sweat, and exposed to this bitter cold wind?"

"Och, faith!" said he, striking his hands crosswise on his shoulders, "I wish I was in a sweat meself!" And he went into the cabin and left the poor beast to his fate. Does it pay to hire such a man even to drive a cart? If the horse were his own, he would probably have known better.

All occupations, however common, require some knowledge. When Napoleon, who undertook to drive his own carriage one day, upset it on turning a corner too sharply, he exclaimed: "I see, now, the truth of the old saying, 'Every man to his trade.'"

* * * * *

In addressing a popular audience, there is nothing like beginning with a telling or humorous story, bearing some relation to the subject in hand; for this puts the audience in a good humour, disposes them to listen

to the speaker, and helps him to feel at ease in addressing them.

A friend of mine, who began his address to a large audience somewhat hesitatingly, was told, encouragingly, by the chairman, to "go ahead." "The chairman tells me to go ahead," said the speaker, "which reminds me of a story. A church organist, on sitting down before his organ one Sunday morning, glanced down at the minister, and seeing he was a stranger, thought he would now indulge in some of his fine organ quavers and dulcet tones; so calling up one of the choir-boys, he wrote a line and said to the boy, 'Give this to the man below.' The boy, not knowing he meant the man who blew the organ-bellows, gave it to the minister, who read the message as follows: 'Now go ahead; and keep on blowing till I tell you to stop!'" There was a roar; whereupon the speaker continued: "Shall I keep on blowing, Mr. Chairman?" "Certainly, by all means." So he went on and made a capital speech.

The other day we dedicated the third of our big new schools; there was a large audience; and in my address I succeeded in getting them (and myself) in a good humour by quoting, with reference to the big school, the story of the Chicago girl who, on putting on her shoes in the morning, exclaimed: "It is a big thing, and I am *in it!*"

After all, there is nothing a popular audience likes better than to be amused. Like schoolboys, they have come out for a good time, and want some fun as well as instruction. So the amusing story or humorous anecdote is the very salt of an address to a popular audience.

* * * * *

Here is another hint for the young orator: Delegate Mark Smith, of Arizona, has been the recipient of many congratulations on his speech yesterday. His biblical quotation has extorted admiration from men less familiar with the Scriptures.

"Yes," said Smith modestly, "a biblical quotation is a good thing. Many years ago General Huston, of Kentucky, one of the greatest lawyers that State ever saw, said to me: 'In a law case, remember this: an apt biblical quotation, sprung at the right moment, will knock seven witnesses out of the box.'"

* * * * *

I find by the federal report of this year (1903) that the total enrolment in all the schools of the United States, public and private, is 18,000,000 scholars, or one-fourth of the entire population. What a field for noble-minded, well-trained teachers! These figures are exclusive of the students in our colleges and universities. "The world has never before seen," says a New York writer, "a nation of eighty millions of free people with twenty millions of them in school!" This is what Russia must do—then the Duma will be all right.

* * * * *

Though a man may speak truth when drunk, he seldom speaks wittily. Only an Irishman can do that. Dr. Tanner, a well-known Irish M. P., meeting Sir Ashmead Bartlett, a fellow-member, who had married a very wealthy lady, old enough to be his grandmother, said to him: "Bartlett, you are a fool." "Oh, you're drunk," retorted the knight. "That's all

right," replied Dr. Tanner; "to-morrow I shall be sober; but you will still be a fool!"

* * * * *

A lady, in a late legal contest, remarked: "I knew he was a gentleman by the way he ordered dinner." By what small things or trifling actions a woman perceives the character or station of a man! A single word, a look, or a wave of the hand is enough. The way a man behaves to his servants or the way a man dines speaks more than words. Cardinal Richelieu discovered a certain gentleman to be a false nobleman by the way he helped himself to olives—he took them with a fork! And the Empress Eugenie declared that a certain learned professor was not a gentleman because he spread his napkin on both knees!

* * * * *

Bernard Shaw says that "Economy, which is the art of making the most of life, is the root of all virtue." It is certainly the root of independence, pecuniary and intellectual; and it may be said, too, to be the root of liberality; for only those who are economical have anything to give. This is strikingly illustrated by the story of the two London citizens who went about collecting money to build a hospital. They came to the door of a gentleman whom they heard scolding his servant for burning only one end of the long matches used at that time. "It is no use to try here," said one of the collectors. "Well, never mind; let us try." They laid their case before the economical gentleman, who opened a drawer, from which he gave them a hundred guineas. The collectors, in surprise, told him what they had overheard. "That," said the

gentleman, "is how I can be liberal in this case—I am economical in all else."

* * * * *

"No man in public life," said Junius, "can act or speak fearlessly, except he be pecuniarily independent."

"American political life," said General Logan, "is a great ocean whcse shores are strewn with the wrecks of young men." What a warning to guard against temptation!

* * * * *

When I was a little boy, I had a bit of experience with another boy that was almost as good as that of Franklin with the man who had an axe to grind.

One day, when I was about twelve years old, I was sent off on an errand, just before a shower, with a good stout umbrella in my hand. The shower came on suddenly; and I was marching along safely under my umbrella, when a well-dressed young fellow, a little older than I, and of some pretensions to rank, whom I knew by sight but not to speak to, came running under my umbrella to save himself from a ducking. He was awfully kind to me; told me I was a mighty nice boy to have such a good umbrella; and showed me every attention, until his turn was served. On meeting him some days afterwards, I naturally went up and spoke to him as one with whom I was acquainted. To my surprise and chagrin, he cast a scornful glance at me, turned on his heel, and walked away without saying a word to me.

I have often thought of this in after life. When the Hon. Mr. Highup, in some crisis in his career, sud-

denly became very polite to me, I have thought: "He wants to take advantage of my umbrella; that's all." Or when Miss McFlimsy requested graciously to assist me in my work, I knew she had heard of my protecting umbrella and wanted to get under it. Oh, if we could only get at the heart of some people, who pay us such civil attentions, how often we would find that their only motive was "to get under our umbrella!"

* * * * *

The proverbs of a nation are the distilled wit of generations of its people; and the true wit of the race is oftentimes in proportion to the truth and beauty of its proverbs. Lord John Russell defined a proverb—as "the wit of one and the wisdom of many." Of all races, few possess more beautiful sayings than the Irish. "The silent mouth is melodious." And another saying, inculcating a charity which is spiritually needed in this modern world of ours, is that which tells us "Our eyes should be blind in the abode of another," and "A gentleman should look at a lady's defects with his eyes shut." The beautiful faith and the magnificent optimism of the Irish race are well pictured in the proverb, "God never shuts one door but He opens two." "Autumn days come softly, quickly, like the running of a hound upon a moor," is poetic, vivid truth. And here is a sharp, satirical one that cuts several ways at the same time: "A poem ought to be well made at first, for there is many a one to spoil it afterwards."

* * * * *

Could there be a more felicitous conception than that of the Persian poet:

"On parents' knees, a naked new-born child,
Thou hast wept while all around thee smiled!
So live, that when thou nearest thy long last sleep,
Thou shalt smile while all around thee weep!"

* * * * *

With most literary men—generally the most happy—writing is simply a hobby or a pastime, not a trade. They have some other means of earning a living; they follow something else as a profession, and give only their leisure time, and especially only their inspired moments, to literary work. When they have something to say, they say it; and then turn their minds to other things. Without some other occupation for bread-winning, the mind of a literary man is apt to become twisted and distorted. Dr. Holmes knew this; so he stuck to his trade or profession to the end of his life. He was a wise man, and consequently lived a happy life. So also with that sunny spirit, Charles Lamb, and many others. Even Walter Scott never depended on literature for a living. He knew, as Dr. Holmes did, the danger of entire devotion to literature. Look at Dickens, Bulwer Lytton, Byron, Landor, Carlyle; what a miserable existence each of them had!

So long as Hugh Miller worked at his trade, his life was sweet, cheerful, happy. He gained his bread by manual labour, wrote only when he felt like it, and enjoyed to the full the common blessings of life. But when he took to writing and thinking alone, it crazed him, and he ended by suicide. Goethe came near suffering a similar fate; at one time he slept for weeks with a pistol under his pillow, meditating suicide. Well was it for him that Weimar's duke gave him

other work to do, and left him only a part of his time for literature.

Daily-bread work kept them in sympathy with their kind, with their fellow-workers and daily companions, and prevented any one of them from becoming a monomaniac like Landor, or a cynic like Carlyle, or a crank like Ruskin, or an aimless dreamer like Coleridge. Macaulay, knowing and feeling this, used to go down to one of the government offices and toil every day for hours at some ordinary clerk work. He knew that the overstrained brain brings on misery of some kind, and he wisely worked with his hands to prevent it. Tolstoi works with his hands from other motives; but it is well that he does so from any motive. In fact, many colleges are now planned on the principle of work and study.

* * * * *

It will, I think, be found that as a general thing men of great undertakings and great conceptions are large men and good eaters. Marlborough and Blücher and Bismarck were big men and good eaters. So were Sir Walter Scott and Dr. Johnson and Handel. It is related of the latter that one day he stopped at an inn and ordered dinner; then, after waiting a long while for the dinner to be served, he inquired what was the reason. "I am waiting for the company," replied the landlord. "Bring along the dinner!" cried Handel; "I am the company!"

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Here is a scientific fact which should be read in stentorian tones to every school-trustee and every teacher in the United States. It is from an address by Dr.

Storrs, before the Connecticut Medical Society, at one of its annual conventions:

"We estimate that a school-room of fifty pupils would throw off in the form of cutaneous and pulmonary exhalation, in one month of five hours each day, seven hundred and fifty pounds, which contains much putrescible matter, and, in rooms deficient in ventilation, is precipitated and gives in its decay the peculiar odour of the badly ventilated room. These respiratory impurities furnish the best possible conditions for the growth and dissemination of microbes.

"Children from homes infected with germ diseases, consumption, scarlet fever, and diphtheria, will poison the air of a room, unless the floating germs are carried off by fresh currents of air. The air space allowed for each child in the schools in Hartford is two hundred and twenty-five cubic feet, with the air to be changed three times per hour. This is about one-third of the amount needed."

How necessary soap and water, paint and whitewash, are to every schoolhouse at least once a year!

I have been informed that in 1848, or thereabouts, when the cholera came to New York, and the hospitals were filled, some hospital managers erected tents for the sick in the hospital grounds; and then it was found that while most of those in the hospitals died, nearly all those in the tents recovered! So much for fresh air.

* * * * *

And here is another item (from the *Popular Science Monthly*) well worth remembering:

"Nature takes the time when one is lying down to give the heart a rest, and that organ consequently makes ten strokes less a minute than when one is in an

upright posture. Multiplying that by 60 minutes gives 600 strokes. Therefore in eight hours spent in lying down the heart is saved nearly 5,000 strokes, and as the heart pumps six ounces of blood with each stroke, it lifts 30,000 ounces less of blood in a night of eight hours in bed than when one is in an upright position. As the blood flows so much more slowly through the veins while one is lying down, extra coverings must then supply the warmth usually furnished by circulation."

* * * * *

What people, do you think, are the longest lived in New York City? And how do they manage to live so long? A writer in a New York paper shows, by facts and figures, that the Jews are the longest lived; and that the reason is, they are the most temperate, not only in drink but in food, and are consequently willingly insured by all life-insurance companies. He shows, further, that the Irish are, by reason of their too great affiliation with the saloon, decreasing in longevity, and that the same is the case with the Germans, whose beer-drinking habits bring on kidney troubles and shorten their lives. The Swedes and Norwegians, who are usually engaged in farming in America, are also among the long-lived people. It was Herbert Spencer who said that the American people lived at too high a pressure, and that in learning how to work they were forgetting how to play. This is why so many native Americans die early of nervous diseases. We must preach a little less of the gospel of work and more of the gospel of rest and recreation. What better rest than that of pleasant conversation?

* * * * *

Dr. Weber's rules, which may be summed up in the Greek maxim, "Nothing in excess," are worth remembering:

Most of us eat too much, and for a man making no special demand on his strength 4½ ounces of nitrogenous food and 3½ ounces of fats or other hydrocarbons per day are ample. Sleep, too, should not be prolonged beyond six or seven hours, according to sex; and it may be doubted whether the frequent naps to which old age is so naturally disposed do not give occasions to the macrophagi, of which they are prompt to take advantage. Wine, which has been called the blood of the aged, has as often proved their bane, and should be taken sparingly. Exercise—constant, daily and regular—is of the greatest advantage.

* * * * *

It may seem contrary to reason and experience to say that it is not the strong and vigorous that live long, but those of a weak and delicate constitution: yet such is often the case. The strong and vigorous are generally careless and even reckless in their manner of living; they think nothing can break them, and venture anything; while those of a delicate constitution seldom undertake anything beyond their strength, and live carefully and regularly. Dana, the poet, found himself an invalid at forty-five; then he began to be careful and regular in his daily life, and lived till ninety. However, heredity is a great factor in the matter of long living.

* * * * *

You know that genius has been defined as "the power of concentrating the mind on one subject," "the power of intense application," "the habit of getting up in

the early morning and lighting one's own fire," and so on. Here is a writer in the *Saturday Evening Post* who makes a suggestion worth considering:

"It is impossible to read competent biographies of great men or to study the superior men about one without verifying the old saying that genius is feminine. Why, then, is it that the male dominates?

"Possibly this may be an explanation: The male has force but is impatient of detail. The female has the patience for detail but lacks force. *The superior person has masculine force plus feminine grasp of detail*—plus the power to select the essential details and to reject the non-essentials."

* * * * *

Here is a stump speech that is unrivalled for cleverness. It was on the eve of a by-election in Ontario, Canada, when a meeting was held at which the liberal candidate was absent. The government candidate spoke thus: "Fellow-citizens, you know me—I am a self-made man—that's all I need say—you know me." Whereupon the representative of the absent candidate, a little French-Canadian lawyer, made this reply: "Fellow-citizen, I'm verrie sorry me frien could not come—I'd like mooch you have seen heem. He verrie deeferent from dis man dat have joost sat down. *He* says he made himself. I believe dat. But *my* man—God made heem! And, my friens, dere is joost as mooch deeference between de men as dere is between de makers!" That was all his speech; but that was enough for the audience, and quite too much for the man who made himself! Was not this as clever as Henry Clapp's utterance: "Yes, Horace is a self-made man; and he worships his creator!"

* * * * *

"Women are the inheritors of the oldest, most universal human wisdom. They have more sense than men, for the simple reason that a man has to be a specialist, and a specialist has to be a fanatic. The normal man all over the world is a hunter or a fisher or a banker or a man of letters or some silly thing. If so, he has to be a wise hunter or a wise banker. But nobody with the smallest knowledge of professional life would ever expect him to be a wise man. But his wife has to be a wise woman. She has to have an eye to everything."—*G. K. Chesterton.*

Is it not a fact, that though women don't study half as much as men, they are wiser than most studious men?

This under the nose—
  But it is true to the letter—
The man thinks he knows;
  But the woman knows better!

* * * * *

It is not every author who can publish his book at his own expense. Many young poets, however, have done so; notably, Longfellow, Holmes, Emerson, and Whittier. There is a young English poet who lately made the venture, and found his first book of poems "went off" in a rather unexpected manner. Not having heard anything for a considerable time of the result of his venture, the young poet wrote to his publisher to "know the worst," which he calculated at about £70.

"Let me know how many copies of the edition have gone off," ran his humble epistle, "and what is the balance I owe you." The publisher wrote back: "Your whole edition has gone off, leaving a balance of

£25 in your favour. Cheque enclosed." The poet, full of delight, rushed to the publisher to obtain particulars of the unexpected sale.

"My dear sir, you had better not ask," said the publisher.

"Not ask! Why not? You wrote to say that the edition had all been sold; it must have been sold to somebody."

"Pardon me. I wrote that it had 'gone off.' So it has, the whole of it; not a copy is left. There was a fire in the warehouse, and the contents were insured!"

I wonder what his feelings were on hearing this! But some poets would rather have this account than the one they often have.

When the first edition of Rogers' poem, "The Pleasures of Memory," sold slowly, Rogers had a number of expensive plates made to illustrate it, which made it sell rapidly; whereupon his friend Luttrell observed, "Had it not been for the plates, the poem would have been dished!" I suppose Luttrell would have said of the above-mentioned poet that his hash would have been cooked had it not been for the fire!

The poet Coleridge, after warning young authors against publishing a book in any other than through the usual trade-channels, tells in his Biographia Literaria this story:

A learned and exemplary old clergyman published at his own expense two volumes, octavo, entitled "A New Theory of Redemption." The work was severely handled by the press critics, and the old gentleman used to exclaim: "Well, in the second edition I shall have an opportunity of exposing their ignorance and malignity." Two or three years passed without any tidings from the bookseller who had undertaken the

publication; for the latter was perfectly at his ease, as he was well aware that the author was a man of considerable property. At length the accounts were written for; and in the course of a few weeks they were presented by the rider for the house in person. The old gentleman put on his spectacles, and, holding the scroll with no very firm hand, began:

"Paper, so much: Oh, moderate enough—not at all beyond my expectation! Printing, so much—well, moderate enough, too! Stitching, binding, advertising, carriage, etc., so much. Still nothing amiss. *Selleridge.* (Ah, I see orthography is no part of a bookseller's acquirements) £3, 3s. 6d. Bless me! only three guineas for the what d'ye call it? the selleridge?"

"No more, sir," replied the rider.

"Nay, but that is too moderate—only three guineas for selling a thousand copies of a work in two volumes?"

"Oh, sir," cried the young traveller, "you have mistaken the word. None of them have been sold; this £3, 3s. 6d. is for the cellarage, or warehouse room, in which they have been stored!"

Subsequently, on presenting a copy to a friend, the old gentleman used to tell the story with great good humour and still greater good-nature. How many authors could do that?

I have been told of an American clergyman, who had a volume of sermons published on this paying plan, and he received, after two years, an account of expenses and sales, which ran as follows: Composition, $400; paper, $150; printing, $175; binding, $150; advertising, $300; copies sent to the press and to friends, $250; miscellaneous expenses, $97.50; total,

$1,622.50; number of copies sold, seven, $8.75; amount due by the author, $1,613.25!

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"There is nothing in America," says Moncure D. Conway, who has lived for thirty years in London, "to give you an equivalent for what you would give up in London. There is no such thing in America, it seems to me, as a literary class: I doubt if there ever will be. It is because our literary men are not great enough nor numerous enough to create a class, but still more because money is the national gauge of power. I believe if you got at the truth of the inmost feeling of ninety-nine men out of a hundred in what are called the 'financial circles' of America, it would be found to be four-fifths contempt for literary people, one-tenth pity, and one-tenth respect. They think it is well to have a Longfellow and a Whittier, and a few more like them, because other countries have authors—'a thing no country should be without,'—but for anything beyond that—No! Their only feeling about literature is that it is an uncommonly poor way of making a living. If they had to take their choice between Mrs. Southworth and Hawthorne, they would choose Mrs. Southworth unhesitatingly. She had written fifty-nine novels and made a fortune—that is worth while!"

Well, I suppose it was once so in England, too, when Milton got ten pounds for "Paradise Lost," and Goldsmith sixty for "The Vicar of Wakefield." And then, in Johnson's time, how much respect was paid to literature and literary men?

* * * * *

A Methodist clergyman said, very happily, that when you get to Heaven you will have three surprises: The first, to find a great many people there whom you did not expect to see there; the second, to find a great many people not there whom you did expect to see there; and the third, to find yourself there!

* * * * *

Here is an encouraging story for a young writer—though discouraging for others:

"A friend came to me once," says James Whitcomb Riley, the well-known author, "completely heart-broken, saying that his manuscripts were constantly returned, and that he was the most miserable wretch alive. I asked him how long he had been trying. 'Three years,' he said. 'My dear man,' I answered, laughing, 'go on; keep on trying till you have spent as many years at it as I did.' 'As many as you did!' he exclaimed. 'Yes, as long as I did.' 'What? You, James Whitcomb Riley, struggled for years?' 'Yes, sir, through years; through sleepless nights, through almost hopeless days. For twenty years I tried to get into one magazine; back came my manuscript eternally. I kept on. In the twentieth year that magazine accepted one of my articles. I was not a believer in the theory that one man does a thing much easier than any other man. Continuous, unflagging effort, persistence and determination will win. Let not the man be discouraged who has these.'"

* * * * *

How well and how coolly Lincoln could reply is thus shown: Judge Douglas had tried to degrade him by enumerating the various menial or manual employments in which he had been engaged. Lincoln, when

he rose to reply, came forward, and said he "was very much obliged to Judge Douglas for the very accurate history that he had taken the trouble to compile. It was all true, every word of it. I have," said Lincoln, "worked on a farm; I have split rails; I have worked on a flat boat; I have tried to practise law. There is just one thing that Judge Douglas forgot to relate. He says that I sold liquor over a counter. He forgot to tell you that, while I was on one side of the counter the judge was always on the other side!"

The wit is admirable; but was not his coolness and good humour under such a provoking attack equally so? It is a great thing, a great advantage, to keep cool under provocation.

* * * * *

How differently some authors look at their works! When the King of Prussia sent the order of merit to Thomas Carlyle, in recognition of his merit as the author of that masterpiece in biography, the "Life of Frederick the Great," Carlyle was rather irritated by it. He said he would have been better pleased if the King had sent him a few pounds of good tobacco! When Varnhagen von Ense called on him with the thanks of all Germany for his great life of Frederick, he said, "I have no satisfaction in it at all; only labour and sorrow. What the devil had I to do with your Frederick, anyhow?" Such was the result of his work of ten years, the study of over a thousand volumes, and the reading of innumerable manuscripts! And I don't think that James Parton, in his ten years' labour on the "Life of Voltaire," had any great satisfaction—it wore him out and brought him only sorrow and sadness.

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It is admitted that we are the richest people in the world to-day—the richest people the world has ever seen. The vaunted wealth of Crœsus is estimated at only eight million dollars, but there are seventy American estates that average thirty-five millions each.

But, in view of the vast corruption in the cities, can we say that we are the most upright, fair-minded, and honourable people in the world? That would be a far nobler distinction, which, it is hoped, we shall gain some day.

* * * * *

"What are you here for?" asked Andrew White of the students at Cornell. "You are here for the development and discipline of all your powers, moral, intellectual and physical. The first thing to be gained in student life is decision of character. Study yourself, measure your own powers, take advice of your friends and of the Faculty, and when you have selected your course, stick to it. Be thorough in your work; don't drop stitches here and there. Want of thoroughness is the crying sin of American life to-day. We constantly have these two curious things: A vast number of young fellows run about the country doing almost anything and doing it ill; and, on the other hand, a considerable number of places looking almost in vain for somebody to do the best work."

A good way to develop the power of the will, he said, is by resolving to rise early and carrying out the resolution. A man who can get up in the morning early can do anything. Mr. White closed his address by recommending all to look to their religious life. "Every man is false to himself," he said, "unless

he comes into communion with the higher powers of the universe."

* * * * *

"Dr. Somerville Hastings, who lectured at the London Institute of Hygiene the other day on 'Cleanliness Is Next to Godliness,' said that people were much cleaner now than in the reigns of Queen Mary and Elizabeth, when the washing of clothes was unknown. Cotton was hardly in use and linen was expensive. The poor wore rough woollen garments, which were never washed, and the better classes adorned themselves with silks and velvets, which were dyed when they would no longer pass muster in regard to cleanliness. It is recorded, continued Dr. Hastings, that James I. never washed either hands or face during the period he posed as the wisest fool in Christendom, but confined his cleanliness within the narrow limits of wiping his finger tips upon a damp napkin.

"A very simple experiment, made by an eminent bacteriologist, determines in a startling manner the potential dangers associated with accumulations of dust in living rooms. A pin-point was used to convey as much dust as so small a vehicle will carry. This yielded no less than 3,000 colonies of living germs, when cultivated on gelatine, and although, fortunately, every species was not representative of disease, yet the majority were potent sources of decomposition and danger to health."—*London Daily Telegraph.*

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A writer in the New York *Sun* who describes his struggles to get employment on the New York press is replied to by another writer, who declares he lacks humour, and that a newspaper writer must have

humour, first and foremost, without which he never can succeed. He should go into trade, where a man can succeed without humour.

* * * * *

"Chief Justice Story attended a public dinner in Boston at which Edward Everett was present. Desiring to pay a delicate compliment to the latter, the learned judge proposed as a volunteer toast:

" 'Fame follows merit where Everett goes.'

"The brilliant scholar arose and responded:

" 'To whatever heights judicial learning may attain in this country, it will never get above one Story.' "—*Success.*

* * * * *

At the beginning of the last century there were about 25,000,000 who spoke English; now there are over 300,000,000.

The one difficulty in English is the pronunciation. Its grammar is very easy—Richard Grant White calls it "the grammarless tongue"—but its pronunciation is, like the ways of the "Heathen Chinee," peculiar. Here is an illustration, written by whom I do not know:

> When the English tongue we speak,
> Why is "break" not rhymed with "freak"?
> Will you tell me why it's true
> We say "sew," but likewise "few,"
> And the maker of a verse
> Cannot cap his "horse" with "worse"?
> "Beard" sounds not the same as "heard";
> "Cord" is different from "word";

"Cow" is cow, but "low" is low;
"Shoe" is never rhymed with "foe."
Think of "hose," and "dose" and "lose"
And of "goose" and yet of "choose."
Think of "comb" and "tomb" and "bomb,"
"Doll" and "roll," and "home" and "some,"
And since "pay" is rhymed with "say"
Why not "paid" with "said," I pray?
We have "blood" and "food" and "good";
"Mould" is not pronounced like "could."
Wherefore "done," but "gone" and "lone"?
Is there any reason known?
And, in short, it seems to me
Sounds and letters disagree.

This reminds one of the difficulties of the Frenchman with such words as bow, low, bough, rough, tough, dough, cough, etc.

* * * * *

The office boy to a large firm of publishers was a smart lad, and when recently he was sent to one of the operative departments with a message he noticed at once that something was wrong with the machinery. He returned, gave the alarm, and thus prevented much damage. The circumstance was reported to the head of the firm, before whom John was summoned.

"You have done me a great service, my lad," he said. "In future your wages will be increased $1 weekly."

"Thank you, sir," said the bright little fellow. "I will do my best to be worth it, and to be a good servant to you."

The reply struck the chief almost as much as the lad's previous service had done.

"That's the right spirit, my lad," he said. "In all

the years I have been in business no one has ever thanked me in that way. I will make the increase $2. Now, what do you say to that?"

"Well, sir," said the boy, after a moment's hesitation, "would you mind if I said it again?"

* * * * *

Very few people consider that the literary man has more competitors than any other professional man, and that a second-class lawyer or doctor may succeed well enough, whereas none but a first-class literary man can make a living at literature. Who are his competitors? The dead, whose voice is generally more esteemed than that of the living. All the great geniuses of the past are his competitors, and very often their works can be had for the asking.

* * * * *

The following is almost as good as James T. Fields' "Owl Critic":

The critic stood, with scornful eye,
Before a picture on the wall;
"You call that art? Why, see, the fly
Is not natural at all!

"It has too many legs—its head
Is far too large—who ever saw
A fly like that—its colour red!
And wings that look as if they—pshaw!"

And with a gesture of disgust
He waved his hand; when lo! the fly
Flew from the picture. "Ah, some dust,"
The critic said, "was in my eye."

* * * * *

I read some time ago of a lady who was standing with her little boy, watching a splendid troop of soldiers passing up Broadway, each company with a fine band playing at its head, when the little fellow, who was watching them with great interest, exclaimed, "Mamma, what are the soldiers for that make no music?"

How much there is in that simple child's remark! What would Wordsworth not have made of it! How many people there are who "make no music" in their march through life!

* * * * *

Here is one of the incidents such as Charles Reade would gladly cut out of a newspaper, and work up in one of his novels:

"A rich American, residing in the St. George's quarter, had been for some little time past the victim of systematic thefts. Banknotes and money not left under lock and key disappeared regularly. M. Cornette, the Commissary of Police, was informed of the robberies. He found it would be impossible to keep an effective watch on the bedroom where the thefts occurred, but he adopted a stratagem which turned out successfully. A small vial containing a mixture of picric acid and fuschine was placed in a metal case for holding gold, and a few Napoleons were placed on top. In order to get out the gold the metal case had to be held upside down, and then, of course, the chemical preparation would run out and stain the thief's hands a bright and indelible yellow. As soon as some of the gold was missed M. Cornette summoned all the servants to his presence. The valet's fingers betrayed him. Realising the uselessness of denying

when caught yellow handed, he confessed, and was duly locked up."

* * * * *

The various ways in which a cold may be caught are thus described by Dr. J. H. Kellogg in *Good Health*: "A little knife-blade of air blowing in through a crack in a window upon some part of the body will chill that part, and the blood vessels of that region will become contracted, affecting, somewhere in the interior of the body, an area in reflex relation with this portion of the surface of the body. When the influence of the cold is continued, this contraction is followed by congestion. When one puts his hands into cold water for a few minutes, they first pale, and then redden. This is reaction. The longer the application and the more intense the degree of cold, the greater will be the contraction and the congestion. So, if the back of the neck is exposed for a long time to the influence of cold, one is likely to have a cold in the lungs, and suffer from congestion of the lungs. If the cold is long continued, it may cause not only a congestion but an inflammation of the nose or the lungs. So, if the bottoms of the feet become wet or chilled, a weakness of the bladder may result if there has ever been a trouble there; or a weakness of the stomach if there has been a catarrh of that organ."

A "knife-blade of air" is a good figure. That one should be as much in danger from such an air-wafer as from the chilly breeze at an open window is worth remembering.

* * * * *

There is a clever young physician in Philadelphia who has never been able to smoke a cigar. He was in-

vited to a large dinner party given by a New York friend. At the conclusion of the repast, when the women had left the table, cigars were accepted by all the men except the physician from Philadelphia. Seeing his friend refuse the cigar, the host in astonishment exclaimed:

"What! not smoking? Why, my dear fellow, you lose half your dinner!"

"Yes, I know I do; but if I smoked, I would lose the whole of it!"

* * * * *

"Men and women range themselves into three classes or orders of intelligence; you can tell the lowest class by their habit of always talking about persons; the next by the fact that their habit is always to converse about things; the highest by their preference for the discussion of ideas."—*Buckle.*

* * * * *

A politician in Albany while playing cards with several members of the Legislature dropped a hundred dollar bill under the table. On his way to bed he discovered his loss, and rushed back to the room, where he met the waiter, who inquired: "Lost something, sir?"

"Yes, I've lost a one hundred dollar bill!"

"It's all right, sir," said the waiter, "I've just found it, and here it is."

"You're a square brick," said the delighted statesman, "and here's five dollars for you."

"Thank you, sir," replied the waiter, "I want nothing for being honest—but," he added, with a sly

grin—"ain't it lucky for you that none of your friends found it?"

* * * * *

I remember that at a discussion on health in the Twilight Club nearly every member who was strong and healthy attributed his health to sleeping at night with open windows. Here is an item worth considering, especially the experience of the Indian:

By almost constant overcovering, day and night, for successive generations, the skin has, by degeneration, adapted itself to its reduced requirements. From birth to senile death we are much overcovered. That a full and vigorously developed skin is a desideratum will be generally conceded. The tendency is for ours to degenerate to a tissue-paper consistency. The exquisite structure of the skin at once indicates its importance as one of the organs of the body.

A homely showing of that functional power which can be developed in the skin is indicated by the story of the Indian. Being almost naked, and yet apparently quite comfortable in inclement weather, he was asked why he did not seem to suffer and be made ill by the exposure; he replied: "White man's face no pain, no sick. Indian all face."

I suppose that a microscopic examination of the skin of the face and that of other parts of the body would show a difference in development. So we may learn something even from the Indian savage about "the best way to become strong."

* * * * *

An Italian count is said to have left for an inscription on his tombstone:

"I was well—
Wished to be better—
Took medicine—
And died!"

I suppose he had neglected to get enough sunshine, fresh air, exercise, and wholesome food, which are better than any medicines.

* * * * *

A gentleman who, on hearing any sad tale, was always in the habit of saying, "It might have been worse," had a friend who determined to cure him. He related a sad dream in which he thought he had died and was in the lower regions. "It might have been worse!" cried the gentleman. "It might have been worse! How could it have been worse?" "It might have been true!" replied the other.

* * * * *

I knew a gentleman connected with a line of steamers who used to work hard in preparing everything before the departure of the vessels, and was in the habit of going on board, just before each vessel started, to say good-bye to the officers and passengers. He never spared himself in any way; did a great deal of work for his friends and the public as well as for his company; was a member of a school-board, president of a club, director of a bank, etc., and thought he could stand any strain. After eighteen years' hard work of this kind he finally broke down, gave up all exertion, and retired from business, while still in the prime of life. When visiting him one day in his enforced idleness, and talking with him about his health, he said to me, "I often think now of the fact that,

when I used to stand on the deck of each parting steamer, chatting with the officers, and wishing the passengers a pleasant voyage, I sometimes felt a strong inclination to go along with them and have a good time too. I ought to have done so; it was nature telling me to rest; it would have rested and might have saved me; but now it is too late!"

Nature usually gives warning before she strikes a fatal blow. It is not harmful to get tired, but it is harmful to get exhausted. When the various powers of the body are hard used for a time, they begin to slacken and give way, and if not repaired by rest, sleep, and recreation, they break suddenly, and a general wreck is the result.

* * * * *

There is so much bad in the best of us,
And so much good in the worst of us,
That it hardly behooves any of us
To talk about the rest of us.

* * * * *

Science teaches that few persons in breathing use more than one-sixth of their lung capacity—which means in such case that only one-sixth of the 175,000,000 of air cells constituting the lung surface are expanded and nourished.

Continued disuse, as we know, of any organ results in atrophy, which means collapse, disease, or decay. Life without air can be sustained about four minutes and without food for forty days. Humanity clamours for food three or four times a day—with often a "pick-me-up" thrown in—and forced feeding to an unwilling, unable stomach is still doing its deadly

work. The Black Hole of Calcutta did its fatal work in one night, and its history is in a slow suicidal way repeated in kind, if not in degree, in every crowded, unventilated room.

* * * * *

Disraeli, on being taunted with his Jewish origin, replied, "Yes, and I am proud of it. Half of Europe worships a Jew, and the other half a Jewess!"

* * * * *

Phrenology is no longer regarded as trustworthy; and physiognomy, or the art of telling character and capacity by the features, is often dangerously wrong. But what say you to indicating character and capacity by the colour of the hair and the eyes? Miss Berry, who had known most of the famous persons of her time, declares that "pale grey eyes, with dark hair, belong to all the very extraordinary characters she had seen—Bonaparte, Byron, and others—while dark eyes, with the greenish cast, imply the first rank with regard to qualities of the heart, and the second with regard to those of the intellect." She goes on to say that "dark eyes with the sedatest cast, however fine, with dark hair, indicate no superiority either of the mind or the heart." It is plain that dark-eyed and dark-haired people were no favourites of hers. Napoleon used to place great confidence in any man with a long nose; and Chantrey, the sculptor, used to declare that a long upper lip was indicative of great imagination.

"The lip is too long," said Sir Walter Scott to Chantrey, when the latter had shown him a life-size bust of Shakespeare, which he had just completed.

"Not at all," replied the sculptor; "I will wager a guinea yours is just as long." Measurement was made, and Sir Walter was found to possess just as much lip as Shakespeare!

But, as with the weather, so with other things; all signs sometimes fail; and I suppose many distinguished persons could be picked out with the opposite of the above-mentioned characteristics. When Curran, the most eloquent of Irish orators, came to the house of a nobleman, who had, before knowing him personally, invited him to dinner, his physiognomy was so much against him that the nobleman exclaimed: "What! *You* are not Curran! You could not say Boo! to a goose." "Boo! my Lord," replied the witty Irishman, and was immediately warmly welcomed.

The latest thing in this line is the discovery of a Boston philosopher, Mr. E. Winslow, who maintains that the surest indication of the temperament and disposition of people is afforded by their backs. "Engagements have been predicted," he affirms, "tragedies in affairs prognosticated, coming events of the most various kinds foreshadowed, by speaking backs." It would be well to know in what language these backs speak. Some indication of it is given in this sentence: "Think of the vain backs with their conscientious wriggle; the high shoulders of conceit; the bridling neck of pride; the dishonest cringe; the bending of reverence; the droop of courtesy; the bowing of modesty; the inclinings of affection; the distortions of labour and pain." I think the remark of a friend of mind more to the point, when he declared he knew that a certain man was lazy because he had such a large, broad bottom!

* * * * *

Here is a significant fact which it would be well for all successful business men to consider. A gentleman who had been forty years president of a bank in Massachusetts declared to a friend of mine that during that period over ninety-five per cent. of the depositors in the bank had failed in business. At first blush, this seems an incredible statement; but does the reader know five business men out of a hundred who have made money enough, or who consider they have made money enough, to retire? That is the weak point in all successful business men; they don't know when to stop. When they have ten thousand a year, they think they must make twenty thousand; when they have twenty thousand, they must make forty; and so on. They never really enjoy life; it is all work and no play with them; and their good time is always *coming*, never come. In view of this fact, I think every salaried man who has a fixed income which enables him to live comfortably ought to be satisfied; and, in view of the fact that most business men eventually fail, I think it remarkable that business men go on giving large and long credits until they are landed with their debtors in the bankruptcy court.

* * * * *

We seldom speak of an able business man as a man of genius; but the fact is, few men are better deserving of the title. Probably more genius is required to manage successfully a large business concern than to write a successful novel, or lead an army to victory. The following story of Colonel T. A. Scott—who was a man of great business capacity with sense enough to retire when he had made enough to live comfortably—forcibly reminded me of the truth of this state-

ment; for Colonel Scott seems to have had the genius of Wellington, who was noted for his quick perception and his power of instantly detecting and taking advantage of any omission or false movement on the part of an enemy in battle.

A distinguished lawyer, whom Colonel Scott engaged as counsel in an important railway suit, prepared a statement of the case with unusual care, and believing it irrefutable, visited his client for further consultation. The man of affairs listened to every detail without uttering a word. Then when the lawyer asked, "What do you think of my presentment of the case?" Mr. Scott said quietly, "It is perfect and unanswerable in every respect except one," and the colonel proceeded to point out an omission or defect which would have rendered the lawyer's whole argument worthless. The lawyer, seeing it at once, said he had never been so heartily ashamed of any shortcoming in his life; for he had failed to notice, after the most painstaking study of the case, the vital point, which the man of affairs instantly detected. Well might he have exclaimed, on thinking of this afterwards, "Great Scott! what a genius he had!"

* * * * *

It has been affirmed that much intercourse with good society enables a man of originally humble condition to shake off the shyness and awkwardness acquired from long association with the ignorant and illiterate. Not always; or not entirely so. Look at Goldsmith. To the last he "chatted like poor poll," and ever preferred to be chief among humble working people to being equal among men of culture and learning. When he wrote, his spirit soared above all meaner

things, and he walked with angels; but when he came down, the humblest people were his companions, and only among such was he at his ease. It is hard, very hard, to shake off habits and likings acquired in youth, or from long association with the humble and illiterate. But Goldsmith was a bachelor, and had little communion with women. That was the fatal defect in his character or career. I venture to say that there is only one sure cure for the shyness and awkwardness of a man of humble origin, which is to marry a woman of culture and refinement. That is his only chance, if he ever gets it.

* * * * *

It requires almost a lifetime of study and practice to become perfect in any foreign tongue. Carl Schurz is the only German I know in America who spoke and wrote English perfectly, and Bayard Taylor the only American who spoke and wrote German perfectly. Herculean effort and everlasting study are required to master a foreign tongue and speak it like a native.

* * * * *

We all know what funny mistakes foreigners often make in speaking English. I suppose a hundred such mistakes could easily be collected; but what would this prove? Does not everybody make mistakes in the use of a tongue that is not *native* to him? And, by the way, one of the funny things is the misapprehension of this word *foreigners* by those very people who laugh at the mistakes of foreigners. An Englishwoman in Germany, hearing herself and her party spoken of as foreigners, exclaimed: "Foreigners! Why, no; we are English; *you* are foreigners!" But such mistakes

are most comical when made on a public occasion by some distinguished person. The famous lawyer, Pierre Soulé, once United States senator from Louisiana, noted for the precision and deliberation with which he spoke English, once made a mistake which set both judge and jury laughing immoderately. It was in an argument in a court in New Orleans, in a murder case. He intended to make a very dramatic and pathetic statement of the tragedy, which had taken place in the kitchen of a public house; and he thought he was getting on finely, when the jury and the audience burst out laughing, which he could not understand. At last he indignantly appealed for an explanation to the judge, who was also laughing. "Why, Mr. Soulé," said his honour, "you doubtless intend to say the murder was committed in the kitchen, but you say in the *chicken!*"

A distinguished Frenchman, who was invited to dinner by Mr. John Walter of the London *Times*, exclaimed, on meeting his host and hostess: "I hope you are well off, Mr. Walter; and I hope you, too, are well off, Mrs. Walter!" "I hope you are well off, too," replied his host, good-naturedly. On reading this, I could not help thinking that many a person is well off who is far from well; and that many others are well who are far from well off; and that neither would exchange his condition for that of the other. Do we really know *when* we are well off?

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Mr. Justin McCarthy tells this story: "Among the foreign visitors whom I met at Fletcher Moulton's house, there was one whom I cannot help associating with an anecdote which caused some amusement to the

household at the time. He was a young Frenchman who had acquired a certain command of fluent English, but who, as it will be seen, was not quite up to the conventional niceties of the language. He came to stay on a visit at the house of my friend; and, on the day of his arrival, one of the daughters of the house happened to mention to him that there was to be a dinner party that evening. 'Ah, then,' said he, with the satisfied smile of one who knows all about dinner parties, and is master of the situation, 'I shall come down in my night-clothes!'"

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There is nothing that fixes a truth in the mind like an illustrative story. All strong impressive writers and speakers make use of such illustrations. For we remember things by association; one fact carries another along with it; and it is thus that important truths are indelibly fixed in the mind. Take this as an example, from a discourse by the Rev. W. M. Taylor:

"A distinguished botanist, being exiled from his native land, obtained employment as an under-gardener in the service of a nobleman. While he was in this situation, his master received a valuable plant, the nature and habits of which were unknown to him. It was given to his head-gardener to be taken care of, and he, fancying it to be a tropical production, put it into the hothouse (for it was winter), and dealt with it as with the others under the glass. But it began to decay. Then the under-gardener asked permission to examine it. As soon as he looked at it, he said: 'This is an arctic plant; you are killing it by the tropical heat into which you have introduced it.' So he took it outside, and exposed it to the frost, and, to the

dismay of the head-gardener, heaped pieces of ice around the flower-pot; but the result vindicated his wisdom, for straightway it began to recover, and was soon as strong as ever. Now, such a plant is Christian character. It is not trial or difficulty that is dangerous to it, but ease. Put it into a hothouse, separate it from the world, surround it with luxury, hedge it in from every opposition, and you take the surest means of killing it."

* * * * *

It is a singular fact that the face and features of some persons assume, after death, much more distinctly than in life, the very cast and expression of one of their ancestors. In a letter from The Hague, July, 1884, within a few days after the death of the last Prince of Orange, the writer says:

"I went at once to the palace and saw the Prince. It is very unreal now; but the likeness to William the Silent is quite marvellous. Mr. W. was so struck with it, that if there had not been great difficulties, he would have desired to have a photograph taken even now. The face had a kind of fixed, stern, elderly look, exactly like our head of William the Silent."

What a train of reflections this incident inspires! Notwithstanding all our education, our creeds, custom, prejudices, all the influences of environment and of intercourse with other people, there is a deep underlying tendency in all of us, derived from our ancestors, which impels us to acts of greatness or of guilt! And shall not we, long after we have lain in forgotten graves, still by the traits and tendencies transmitted to our posterity, influence their character and actions? It is well to know who our ancestors were, and what

they did or attempted to do; for those things teach us much of ourselves.

* * * * *

A Chicagoan was praising the late Marshall Field. "Mr. Field was a kindly man," he said. "He spoke ill of no one. And when his opinion was asked of a person, and it was not a favourable opinion, he would express it in such a gentle and quaint way that its sting would be quite lost.

"Once at a dinner I praised the conversational talent of a man across the table. I said to Mr. Field:

" 'Do you know him?'

" 'I have met him,' the other answered.

" 'Well, he is a clever chap,' said I. 'He can talk brilliantly for an hour at a stretch.'

" 'Then, when I met him,' said Mr. Field, 'it must have been the beginning of the second hour.' "

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How pregnant and far-reaching one single short sentence often is! The remark of the clergyman above mentioned reminds me of that of another, which always recurs to me when feelings of vanity arise. On coming down from the pulpit, after delivering one of his best sermons, a hearer said to this clergyman: "You have given us a most excellent sermon, doctor." "The devil told me that before I left the pulpit," he replied. Whenever you are prompted by vain, deceitful, or evil thoughts, you may be sure the devil is right behind you.

* * * * *

I have heard many addresses to graduates in my time, but I never heard a better one than the following

by Mr. Walter S. Carter, which was addressed to the graduates of a law school:

"Stay in the East, young man. Stay here, where there are few lawyers; and don't go West, where there are a lot of them. Go to a small place in the East, and you are likely to rise. There have been many changes in law practice in the last few years. Think how the law offices themselves have changed. Instead of being dark and dingy, they are light and airy and comfortable now, and, instead of bare floors, you see Turkish rugs. Just compare the offices of Daniel Webster and Elihu Root, for example. I'll give you some advice. Get into a good law office, if you can. Prepare yourself well on every case. Get a good tailor to clothe you, but don't go to extremes in dressing. Have no peculiarities. Have no long hair and no long whiskers. Don't have a tie that is very narrow or very broad, or a collar that is too high or too low. Let the happy medium be your aim in everything. A good name is better than riches; so be plain in spelling your name; don't put a 'y' in Franklin or any such thing as that, and spell out your first given name. Learn to write plainly. Look up your cases thoroughly. Richard H. Dana, in Boston, got a number of cases just because he knew about sailing and the sea. Look up anatomy in criminal cases. Senator Foraker once won a case by studying up for a few weeks with the best teachers the subject of chemistry, and he beat a man who was then a better lawyer. Lastly—and this is something that will please you all—get married, even if you have to do so on the principle of the Irishman who said he could almost support himself, and his wife ought to do something! And don't make the mistake of overcharging when you make out your bills, for

you are young, and grey hairs count for something in law."

This is excellent advice, almost as good as that of Lincoln, who said: "Extemporaneous speaking should be practised and cultivated. It is the lawyer's avenue to the public. However able and faithful he may be in other respects, people are slow to bring him business if he cannot make a speech. And yet there is not a more fatal error to young lawyers than relying too much on speech-making. If any one, by reason of his rare powers of speaking, shall claim an exemption from the drudgery of the law, his case is a failure in advance. Discourage litigation. Persuade your clients to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser—in fees, expenses, and waste of time. As a peacemaker, the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. A worse man can scarcely be found than he who stirs up litigation. . . . Let no young man, choosing the law for a profession, yield to the popular belief that a lawyer must be a dishonest man. Resolve to be honest, at all events; and if, in your own judgment, you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer."

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"Spell out your first name." Of course. One cannot tell otherwise who the writer is, whether man or woman. To a person who signed his name "B. Short," I could not tell whether he was man or woman; so I said he made his name "too short," whereupon he made it longer in his next letter, "Benjamin Short," which looked and sounded much better.

A man named Alexander Gunn had his discharge

from the public service thus recorded: "A Gun was discharged for making a false report!" Poor fellow! only a son of a gun could do such a thing.

* * * * *

A student asked the president of Oberlin College if he could not take a shorter course than that prescribed by the institution. "Oh, yes," was the reply, "but that depends upon what you want to make of yourself. When God wants to make an oak He takes one hundred years, but when He wants to make a squash, He takes six months."

* * * * *

"In my youth," says James Freeman Clarke, "I knew two young men who adopted for their aims, the one, self-culture; the other, philanthropy. The one sought to educate himself; the other, to do good. After a while, the youth who sought self-culture found that to get it he must quit the still air of delightful study, and go out to help his brother man. He found that he needed work, sympathy, society, in order not to freeze; and so, in order to gain self-development, he became a man of usefulness. The other, who began by doing good, found himself at last growing shallow. He had emptied himself and had to stop to fill himself full again. He said: 'I must *be* something, in order to *do* something. I must gain, in order to give.' So, from motives of philanthropy, he proceeded to cultivate his mind and develop his faculties. I do not think that making self-development an aim will ever lead to selfishness, if this aim is pursued in the spirit of the two parables (the talents and the pounds) to which I have referred. If we cultivate all the powers of body and

soul in order to use them as talents in the service of God, not in order to gain for ourselves glory, or merely to excel others, but because God has made us to grow and intends us to grow, that we may be plants in His garden, every blossom a censer swinging its perfume on the air for Him, every fruit ripening that it may bless and help its creatures—then I believe that this aim will be in all respects a true and good one."

* * * * *

There is an old story of a certain king who gave permission to one of his younger courtiers to go along a certain path, in a forest of young trees, in order to cut for himself a straight cane. But one of the conditions was that he was not to turn back until he had cut his cane. The young man soon saw one that, he thought, was almost perfectly straight; then he perceived another, almost equally good; but this, too, was not quite to his taste; so he went on. But as he progressed, the young branches seemed to become more and more crooked, and at last he was obliged to cut one that was more crooked than the one he had first seen, or probably than any he had yet seen.

The moral is perfectly plain. We should take the best that offers while we can, and not wait until we can get our ideal of perfection, which is never found. I was reminded of this story lately when a friend told me that, in his younger days, he had made up his mind never to buy any pictures until he could afford to buy excellent ones, pictures of real and lasting merit; but, as the years rolled on, he found he was less and less able to buy such pictures, and finally made up his mind to buy such as he could afford, lest he might

never have any at all. And those he did buy were by no means so good as he might at one time have bought.

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Pure cold water should be drunk frequently every day to keep the system pure, while the number of ways in which hot water can be used as an alleviator of pain is legion.

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Apples, in addition to being a delicious fruit, make a pleasant and valuable medicine. A raw apple is digestible in an hour and a half, while boiled cabbage requires five hours. The most healthful dessert that can be placed on a table is a baked apple. If eaten frequently at breakfast with bread and butter, without meat of any kind, it has an admirable effect on the general system, often removing constipation, correcting acidities and cooling off febrile conditions more effectually than the most approved medicines. Apples are excellent for brain-workers, and everybody who has much intellectual work to do should eat them freely. Potatoes, on the contrary, render one dull and lazy, especially when eaten constantly and in excess.

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Any one who loves long words should study German. But the fact is these long German words are to one who studies them easily understood, as they are merely a number of simple words strung together. For instance: A Turkish snuff-box-maker is rendered in German, ein Constantinopolitanischerschnupfstabaksdosenfabrikanter; that is literally, a Constantinopolitan snuff-tobacco-box manufacturer.

Cobbett speaks of the fact that we can in English do what the French cannot do—make compound words; as, Yorkshireman; whereas the French must say, a man of the shire of York. But the Germans beat the English completely in this respect, as the above word shows.

An English divine, the Rev. Mr. Byfield, wrote in a treatise on Corinthians, this sentence: "The immensity of Christ's divine nature hath incircumscriptibleness in respect of place." The incomprehensibility of this sesquipedalian word to many readers is incontrovertible. I think it was Gladstone or one of his followers who used the word Antidisestablishmentarians. That beats incircumscriptibleness.

* * * * *

The *Academy* of London, in commenting on an article on mixed metaphors, cites a letter of the late Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, in which the writer complained that the *concert* of the powers in China was "a mere delusive *screen*, agreeable in *sound*, very *tickling* to the ignorant ear, *calculated to draw* the cheers of the groundlings, but which really *serves* only as a *blind* to ourselves, as a *cover* for ministerial inaction, as a *means of informing* our rivals and foes of all our plans, and as a *lever* wherewith they are enabled to *checkmate* British diplomacy." What a wonderful concert this was!

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This is almost as bad as the blundering sentence of the man who prayed that "the word which had been spoken might be like a nail driven in a sure place, sending its roots downward and its branches upward,

spreading like a green bay-tree, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!"

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Mr. Parton, in his "Life of Voltaire," quotes an old "tariff of matches," in which the various degrees of wealth necessary for a girl to enter the different ranks of French society are set down as follows: "A young woman who had a dowry of two thousand to ten thousand francs a year was a match for a retail trader, a lawyer's clerk or a bailiff; a dowry of ten thousand to twelve thousand francs justified a maiden in aspiring to a dealer in silk, a draper, an innkeeper, a secretary to a great lord; one with twelve thousand to twenty thousand francs was a match for a clerk of court, a court registrar, a notary; one with from twenty to thirty thousand francs might look as high as an advocate or a government officer of considerable rank; one with from thirty to one hundred thousand francs might look as high as a marquis, a president of parliament, a peer of France, a duke."

Pretty much the same state of things exists in France to this day. And are we not coming to something of the same sort in America?

In certain circles the same state of things as that described by Parton exists in America; but there are more love-matches here than anywhere else. I was eighteen months in France, and saw something of the state of things there. The worst of it is that a young man of rank and fortune never thinks of marrying at all until he has wasted his strength and sometimes his substance with unmarried and unmarriageable women.

* * * * *

There was once an old Swiss beggar who used to come regularly once or twice a year to a family in the country, a Swiss farmer's family; and who, being denied alms on one occasion, when the family was in some commotion, exclaimed: "Well, I shall go, and never return; and then see if you will ever get a beggar to come to you again!"

Ridiculous as this speech may seem, it is not without meaning. I believe that the beggar, by moving people to pity and almsgiving, is the means of stirring kindly, benevolent, and consolatory feelings in breasts that would otherwise be strangers to such feelings. In other words, the beggar confers a certain happiness on those who help him; and this fellow knew this. He knew that that family, when his visits ceased, would never be as happy as it was before. A friend of mine, who is by no means rich, tells me that, although he gives a dime or a quarter to every beggar that accosts him, the sum of his giving does not amount to more than twenty-five dollars a year; and I am sure he gets a thousand dollars' worth out of it.

The beggar begs by God's command,
And gifts awake when givers sleep;
Swords cannot cut the giving hand,
Nor stab the love that orphans keep.

—*Emerson.*

* * * * *

The following bit of useful knowledge (from the Washington *Star*) is as valuable as anything I have seen in any book on hygiene:

"The air of a room may be purified in two hours by setting inside of it a wide mouthed pitcher filled

with pure cold water. In three hours at most it will have absorbed all the respired gases in the room, leaving the air purer by that much, but the water will be too filthy to use. If one but knew and could see what it has taken in, he would not touch it. It is estimated that a common pailful of ice-cold water will absorb in six hours one quart of carbonic acid and several pints of ammonia from the air. For the purpose of purifying the air the water is all right, but don't use it to wash in or to drink. For those purposes use fresh water, just drawn, or use from vessels that are always covered either by metal or china, or by several folds of cloth, like a clean towel. Care in the use of drinking water would avert many calamities, as typhoid and other malarial fevers."

* * * * *

Here is one of the most remarkable examples of the benefits of laughter I ever heard of. A party of young people, while on a picnic excursion, discovered a crow's nest on a rocky precipice, and started in great glee to see who could reach it first. Their haste being greater than their prudence, some lost their holds, and were seen rolling and tumbling down the hillside, bonnets smashed, clothes torn, and postures ridiculous, but no one hurt. Then commenced a scene of violent and long-continued laughter, in which they indulged during the day whenever the scene was referred to; and even long afterward the bare mention of the crow's nest occasioned renewed and irrepressible laughter.

Years after this, one of their number fell ill, and became so low she could not speak, and was about breathing her last. One of the picnic party came to

see her, gave his name, and could not be recognised by the sick woman until he mentioned the crow's nest, at which she recognised him and began to laugh, and continued every little while renewing her laughter. From that moment she began to mend, recovered, and still lives—a striking example of the beneficial effects of laughter.

* * * * *

My friend, Tom Hyatt, who is a printer with $20 a week and a family to support—a man who has worked for forty years contentedly at his trade—declared he never saw the man, take him for all in all, with whom he would change places. How many men could say that? I never thought of such a thing until I began to consider it; but when I did begin to think of it, I saw that if the opportunity offered I would also refuse to do anything of the kind. I saw that if I changed with any one else, even a Vanderbilt or an Astor, I would probably never be as happy, as contented, or as useful as I am. Each of us is used to his condition, and probably no other would suit us as well, or be as endurable as the one we are in. This is what Addison teaches in his famous allegory of Jupiter and his proclamation, asking every man and woman to throw down his burden, and then take up another's; whereby not one was satisfied, and each implored the god to let him have his old burden back.

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"Nothing in life is more cheerful than pleasant conversation, nothing more healthily stimulating both to the functions of the body and the activity of the mind. The cultivation of the easy exchange of

thought and experience which makes conversation one of the great enjoyments of life, the one from which is drawn the happiest sense of satisfaction, the glow of the highest enthusiasm, the saving consolation of hope, should surely be encouraged, not as an art but as a duty."—*Sarah Grand.*

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It is related that the actor Fechter was more than once the victim of an outspoken denizen of the topmost circle. On one occasion, in a melodrama, the tragedian was slowly paying over a sum of money to the villain. Everything depended upon whether he had sufficient money for his purpose, and the paying out was most deliberate—so deliberate, indeed, that a young fellow in the gallery, wearying of the scene, enlivened the proceedings by yelling: "Say, Mr. Fechter, give him a cheque!" On another occasion, when the play was "Monte Cristo," the hour twelve-thirty, and the end not yet in sight, the curtain rose discovering Fechter in an attitude of contemplation; not a movement, not a sound broke the silence, until a small but clear voice in the gallery queried in tones of anxiety, "I hope we are not keeping you up, sir?"

* * * * *

In a French theatre, while a Belgian actor was declaiming: "Et dans cet embarras que dois-je faire?" a gamin called out:

"Prenez la poste et retournez en Belgique par le chemin de fer!"

* * * * *

I once asked a young Frenchman of fortune why he

did not marry. "I would," he said, "if I could get acquainted with some girl I liked. You know that in France you cannot even talk to a young lady except her father or mother be present, and there is no possibility of learning her character before marriage. This is all a matter of business in France. You meet the parents of a young lady; say how much you have, what you can do for her, and her parents say the same to you, and, if an agreement be made, the notary is sent for, and the contract is drawn up, signed and sealed and the matter is settled. That's how we get married in France."

In both France and Germany the young marriageable women are esteemed solely according to the amount of dowry they are expected to bring; and this leads, as you may imagine, to a very gross way of looking at women; and, *par conséquence*, to a very gross way, on the part of the women, of looking at men.

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Paul Blouet (Max O'Rell) says that no man in France looks at a woman without a consciousness of sex. Nor any woman at a man without the same feeling. This is not the case with Americans.

* * * * *

"Stop that whistling! Don't you know it is Sunday, and the minister there is listening to you?" said a young officer to a sailor on board an English vessel on which a Presbyterian minister was a passenger. "Nonsense!" said the minister, "let him whistle; it keeps evil thoughts out of his mind." I have always admired that saying and the man that said it, though

I do not know his name. That man knew something of human nature and of the workings of the human heart; and he had a just and generous idea of the Creator. Like Luther, he believed that "music drives the devil away."

* * * * *

Mrs. Blank, the wife of a New York merchant, American born but of German parentage, happened to be on a visit to some of her kinsfolk in a certain town in Germany, when the schoolmaster of the place died, leaving a large family unprovided for. She inquired what was to become of them. Become of them? Why, they would have to go to the poorhouse, of course. Mrs. Blank was astonished, and thought that such a fate was by no means a matter "of course" for such a family. Hiring a coach for the day, she went to see the head of nearly every considerable family in the place, and, presenting a subscription list, which she had headed with a goodly sum from herself, she asked each one for a contribution for the unfortunate family, and before she got through she raised several hundred dollars, enough to set up the poor widow in a business that enabled her to bring up her family respectably. "That," said she, on delivering the money, "is the way we do things in America."

* * * * *

At the conclusion of our Civil War the people of the North raised, as is well known, large sums of money for their successful generals, sums amounting in all to several hundred thousand dollars. Seeing this, some prominent Germans thought they ought to raise something for their countryman, General Sigel, who

was also, in a measure, successful in the war. After scraping up all that was offered by the Germans over the entire country, they got together the magnificent sum of fifteen hundred dollars!

How is this to be explained? Are the Germans stingy? Are they unpatriotic? By no means; but they have not yet acquired the *public spirit* of Americans. The explanation of their conduct is this: They are accustomed, and have been for ages, to have everything of a public nature done for them *by the government;* even their hospitals, theatres and churches are founded and provided for by the government; and they cannot yet conceive of individual exertion for the public benefit. This is why they nearly always leave their wealth in their wills to their relations, and never, or hardly ever, a penny to any public institution.

Let me supplement this story by the remark of a sensible German concerning another family. I was walking along one day with the late Mr. Klund, principal of the Hoboken Academy, when we met two young ladies coming briskly toward us, one of whom was a teacher in a public, the other in a private school. "Look at those girls!" said he, "how neat, well dressed and well kept they look! If they were in Germany they would be in the poorhouse!" "How so?" I inquired. "Why, they belong to a family of seven children who were left, a few years ago, on the death of their father, poor and unprovided for; and yet here, you see, they get along as well as the rest of us!"

* * * * *

"When Sir Edwin Arnold visited New York in 1888," says Moncure Conway, "he stayed at the home

of Mr. Andrew Carnegie, who invited a number of literary people to dine with him; and when the ladies had withdrawn, the conversation fell on the question of retaining Greek and Latin in the Normal College course. Sir Edwin argued warmly that the retention was essential to the preservation of the elegant and beautiful style acquired by English writers at Oxford and Cambridge. Andrew Carnegie thereon broke out with a vehement protest against the absurdity of occupying the best years of youth with dead tongues. Shakespeare knew small Latin and less Greek; he and Burns wrote well enough without it; and Carnegie prophetically declared that the great world growing around these cultivators of classicism was steadily ignoring their existence. The writers listened to were dealing more and more with things, with realities, not with phrases and words. I knew but little of Andrew Carnegie, but, being substantially on his side, was impressed with his vigour, even eloquence at times, and thought to myself that had Carlyle been present he would have taken a hand in the discussion, and sided with Carnegie."

Nine out of ten of the Normal College students never make any use of their Greek and Latin; it never amounts to much anyway; nor does what they learn ever materially influence their style. The same time devoted to French and German would be far more useful, not only in speaking these languages, but in reading French and German literature—Schiller and Molière, for instance. Whoever heard of a Normal-school graduate reading a Greek or Latin book?

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Some of my scholars had got into the habit of shoot-

ing birds with flippers; and last week, two or three of these little feathered creatures, still warm, were brought to me dead, by a little boy, who said they had been shot by one of his classmates. I called the boys up, and upbraided them for their cruelty. The next day, a boy brought me a handsome little redbreast, apparently shot in the same manner; and, after looking at it for a moment, and thinking how cruel it was to destroy such poor, harmless creatures, I gave it back to him, determined to make a strong appeal to the boys. I had hardly sent him away when one of the girls came, weeping and in great distress, to say that she had lost a bird from her hat, and that one of the boys had got it! I was not a little surprised, and immediately sent for the boy and bird. He pulled it out of his trousers pocket, into which it seemed a tight fit, and to the mingled joy and fear of the expectant maiden presented it to her. But, oh horror! it was full of blood and matted feathers; its head and wings drooped deadlike, and its whole appearance soon convinced her that this robin was not her robin, and she went away sorrowful.

Then I thought, Wherein is the difference between the cruelty of the boys and that of the girls? The boys destroy life for fun, and the girls for show! O girls! you who are thought to be pitiful and tenderhearted, have mercy upon these poor little innocent creatures, who adorn God's creation much better than they adorn your hats, and serve God much more innocently than you do.

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I have already spoken of the gentleman who, while

travelling, found so much amusement in listening to what he called "accidental conversations." It is impossible sometimes not to hear such conversations; and the following, which is doubtless one of these, is certainly amusing, and not without a lesson in child-education. It is from the *Washington Star*.

On the New York Central train, bound for the "States" Hotel at Saratoga, was a beautiful but careworn woman with a spoiled child. The lovely mother had spoiled the child herself, and the child was now not only spoiling her, but everybody else. It caused the misery of the nurse, the careworn look of its mother, and the profanity of the passengers. It was truly an *enfant terrible*. After using up the nurse, the fashionable but careworn mother put down her Skye-terrier and took the child in her lap. Then the following dialogue ensued:

"Ma, put up 'is window!"

"No, dear; it's too cold."

"Ma, I want 'is window up."

"Now, lovey, 'oo don't want it up."

"Es, me doo, too! Put it up, Isa!"

"Now, mamma's pretty little darling don't want to catch cold."

"Me don't tare for told; me want it up!"

Then the child seemed to go all to pieces, like a biting parrot in a rage. The seat looked as if it were occupied by a buzz-saw and a fanning-mill. As the noise wore down a little, I heard the mother cooing and saying soothingly, as she raised the window:

"There, mamma's darling, itty sweety, it sal have the window up—so it sal—there—there——"

"Me don't want it up!" cried the child, after it had taken in the situation. "Me want it down!"

"No, sweety, mamma's pet said it wanted it up, and——"

"No, me wants it down. Me——"

"Oh, you sweet sugar soul," said the loving mother, folding the little boy to her breast, while the tears rolled down her cheeks——

"No, me ain't!"

"Yes, precious one."

"Naw!" and then the boy-objector, the infant Holman, resolved itself into a buzz-saw and wind-mill again, while it stamped its feet till clouds of dust rolled out of the cushions.

"Now, darling, don't do so."

"Es, me will!"

Then all the passengers could hear was the mother saying:

"Now, mamma's sweet pet shouldn't do so. Dear little dumpling, just wait till it gets to Saratoga, and it shall have all the windows down in the hotel."

"O Jerry!" exclaimed an elderly lady to her companion, as they got out of the train, "how my fingers did itch to give that youngster a spanking!"

The baby didn't finally stop at the "States" Hotel, but became the *general manager* of a cottage a mile from Saratoga.

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After the Quarter Sessions at an ancient English town had come to an end, the Bar gave a complimentary dinner to the judge, on which occasion not only the judge but his wife was complimented highly; and the son of the judge, rising to reply, said:

"Gentlemen, I thank you with all my heart for your esteem of my mother, but even more so for your ap-

preciation of my father; for, gentlemen, even at such a moment as this I cannot but remember that I am not only the child of my mother, but also his *natural son!*"

* * * * *

Who wrote these fine lines?

Hast thou had a kindness shown?
Pass it on!
'Twas not meant for thee alone;
Pass it on!
Let it travel down the years;
Let it wipe another's tears;
Pass it on!
Till it at last in Heaven appears!
Pass it on!

* * * * *

What a damper to the aspirants for long-lasting literary fame is that late discovery of M. Delille, librarian of the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris! He declares that the paper on which books are now printed soon rots, and that consequently few of them have a chance of long life. Wood-pulp paper does not last like linen-rag paper; the chemicals used in the manufacture thereof cause its speedy decay.

There is one consolation in this discovery: the bad and the worthless books will also rot and disappear, and that is something to be thankful for. One would think these ought, on account of their contents, to decay faster than the others; but this is not likely to occur. A good book will probably live by its repeated editions—unhappily some bad ones live in that way, too—and thus, by its educating and elevating influ-

ence, help the bad ones into their graves. That, at any rate, is the only hope for a good writer. If he do not write what is worthy of perpetuity, his very name will be unknown to that much-respected circle of readers, posterity.

Byron little thought of this when he wrote: "What is the end of fame? 'Tis but to fill a certain portion of uncertain paper."

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Is it not strange that no American or British poet has made anything of that stirring incident in the great storm which occurred some years ago at the Samoa Islands, where the crew of an American man-of-war exhibited, in the face of almost certain death, the most magnanimous and heroic conduct, in cheering their successful rival, the British ship *Calliope*, at her escape? I never read anything more inspiring in my life. In the summer of 1889 there was a number of American and British men-of-war, besides many merchantmen, at the Samoa Islands. Now when the sudden and terrific hurricane came on, the task of these vessels was to get away from the dangerous coast, where they were in imminent danger of being driven on the rocks, and on which several of them were finally driven and lost. While the officers and crew of the American ship *Trenton* were doing their utmost to get out to sea, with furnaces at full blast, engines driven at their utmost capacity, every scrap of sail set, and every art of seamanship exerted, they saw their noble vessel, in spite of all their efforts, gradually nearing the fatal coast; while at the same time they beheld the British ship *Calliope*, which had for a time, like themselves, struggled in vain to make any headway,

gradually gaining on the hurricane, forging her way out of danger, and getting out to sea. Now, though themselves doomed to destruction, and beholding their rival escaping in safety, the crew of the *Trenton* sent up a ringing cheer at the sight, encouraging and animating their British rival while they themselves were going down to death. Was not that grand? Is there anything finer in history? Certainly it matches the famous episode of the British soldiers on the *Birkenhead*, who, after sending off the women and children in all the boats they had at command, ranged themselves on deck, fired a salute, and went down with their vessel.

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Heretofore it has been supposed that the reason why insanity is most common among country people is because of their isolation or solitariness. But the experience of the superintendent of an insane asylum, Dr. S. H. Talcott, tells a different story. He declares that it is because farmers have too little sleep. When we recollect how early the farmers have to be "up and stirring," especially in the summer months, and how long and hard they have to toil, this statement seems not ill founded. Farmers' work, like women's work, is never done; in fact, farmers have little time for anything but work. Mr. E. E. Hale recommends nine hours' sleep to those engaged in severe mental toil; and surely those engaged in severe physical toil ought to have as much. How many hours' sleep do farmers get? To bed at nine or ten, they are generally up at three or four, and labour all day long.

In view of this fact how significant, how wonderfully true and impressive, are the words of the great

dramatic poet, written four hundred years ago, yet growing in force and significance as the years roll on:

> Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleave of care,
> The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
> Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
> Chief nourisher in life's feast.

How came Shakespeare to know this? How came he to know almost everything about human nature? Men of nearly every profession claim him as one of their guild; and yet I have never heard that the weavers claimed him, though they might do so, from this fine figure of the *sleave* (floss or unwrought silk, used for weaving), which, one would imagine, none but a weaver could use so aptly.

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Some brain-workers find themselves unable to sleep when they want to; their brain goes "marching on." The late Rev. Dr. Alexander gives the following excellent remedy for this ailment:

Clergymen, authors, teachers, and other men of reflective habits lose much health by losing sleep, and this because they carry their trains of thought to bed with them. In my earlier years I greatly injured myself by studying my sermons in bed. The best thing one can do is to take care of the *last half hour before retiring*. Devotion being ended, something may be done to quiet the strings of the harp, which otherwise would contiue to vibrate. Let me commend to you this maxim, which I somewhere learned from Dr. Watts, who says that in his boyhood he received it from the lips of Dr. John Owen—a very good pedigree for a maxim: *Break the chain of thought at bed-*

time by something at once serious and agreeable. If you wish to know my method, it is to turn over the pages of my English Bible, alighting on a passage here, a passage there, backward and forward, without plan, and without allowing my mind to fasten on any, leaving any passage the moment it ceases to interest me. Some tranquillising word often becomes a divine message of peace: "He giveth his beloved sleep."

How about the glancing over these clippings and jottings? Would they not do as well? Would they not serve to break the chain of connected thought, and lull the mind to sleep while musing on them?

* * * * *

An English prison-keeper, on showing a visitor around, said: "If the men were not in chapel I could show you our innocent man." "What! an innocent man here? Nonsense!" "We have nearly always one, sir, and have had three at one time." "How do you find them out?" "Find them out? Why, by the smell of them, sir. You don't suppose we live among eight hundred of the greatest villains of the earth without knowing the smell of an honest man!" "Well, granting all that; what do you do then?" "Tell the deputy governor, who at once turns up their papers." "Well, what then?" "Then we gets them a blue cap as soon as we can." "What good does that do?" "Why, it gives them many privileges and some hope."

I could not help thinking, what a pity the judge and jury don't know an innocent man by the smell of him!

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Here is a good legal hit. In an accident case, the doctor (as witness in a cross-examination) laid great

stress upon a superinduced habit of vomiting as evidence of constitutional mischief, and counsel cross-examined on this.

"Have you seen him vomit, doctor?" "No, but I've heard him retch." "That's not vomiting"—a point wrangled over for five minutes, when counsel scored thus: "My lord, retching is not vomiting. I have often seen my learned friend sick of his case, but never knew him to throw up his brief!"

* * * * *

Does the reader know that sleep begins at the feet, and that unless his feet be warm, sleep will not come? A basin or two of water in the sleeping room, too, will, by the moistening and mollifying influence of the water on the air, aid in producing sleep.

* * * * *

There is probably no more miserable or disagreeable situation in the world than that of the man who has contracted debts which he is unable to pay. It is less so with one who has large debts, I think, than with one who has a number of small ones; for most people look upon a large debtor as a clever fellow, while the small debtor is regarded as a rascal. Horace Greeley speaks strongly on this subject: "For my own part—and I speak from sad experience—I would rather be a convict in a State prison or a slave in a rice-swamp than to pass through life under the harrow of debt. Hunger, cold, rags, hard work, contempt, suspicion, unjust reproach, these are disagreeable; but debt is infinitely worse than all of these. And if it had pleased God to spare my sons to be the solace and support of my declining years, the lesson I should have most

earnestly impressed upon them is this: 'Never run into debt.' "

This is strong language; but Horace Greeley knew what he was talking about. Both Kant and Emerson held this oracle to be imperative:

Wouldst thou stop the source of every ill?
Then pay each debt, as if God Himself did bring the bill.

* * * * *

There are many stories told of Charles James Fox which show him to have been, with all his faults, a most princely fellow, strongly reminding me, in some respects, of Shakespeare's Prince Hal. One of these stories is that of the tradesman who, having a note of hand against him for £50, had in vain called, again and again, upon Mr. Fox, to get it cashed. At last the tradesman became impatient, and, pushing aside the servants, came in unannounced upon the statesman, whom he found counting out gold on the table before him. "What do you want, sir?" "I want this note paid." "I cannot pay it now; I have no money." "No money! what is all this gold for?" "That is to pay debts of honour." "Then," said the tradesman, striding toward the grate-fire, and putting his note of hand into it, "mine, too, is a debt of honour." "Ah!" said Mr. Fox, looking at him with admiration, "that changes the situation: here is your money."

But here is a still better story of him—one which shows what an English gentleman is, as compared with one who, though a prince, was far from being a gentleman. It is Daniel O'Connell who tells the story. The prince (afterward George IV.) was dining

with Mrs. Fitzherbert and Mr. Fox, when, after dinner, Mrs. Fitzherbert said: "By the bye, Mr. Fox, I had almost forgotten to ask you what you *did* say about me in the House of Commons the other night? The newspapers misrepresent things so very strangely, you know, that one cannot depend upon them. You were made to say that the prince authorised you to deny his marriage with me." The prince made monitory grimaces at Fox, and immediately said: "Upon my honour, my dear, I never authorised him to deny it." "Upon *my* honour, sir, you *did*," said Fox, rising from the table; "I had always thought your father was the greatest liar in England, but now I see that *you* are." And Mr. Fox left the prince and his discarded consort, never to trust him again, or to speak to him, until, years afterwards, he was compelled to do so.

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It is curious to observe how different the effect of criticism is on different minds. With some, it stirs them to new and better efforts; with others, it depresses aud discourages them, rendering them incapable of further effort. I knew a teacher who, in any class-lesson given before an audience, would go on quietly, even languidly, until some one offered a criticism, when, at once, all his powers seemed to be called into play, and his lesson became a brilliant one. Another would become confused and incapacitated by the very same thing. The elder Booth, who was so cowed and depressed by the brilliant acting of Kean that he refused to complete his engagement with him when he played at Covent Garden, determined to begin anew in America; and here, having no rival to depress him, he surpassed even Kean himself in Shakespearian rôles.

The following story, from the autobiography of Giovanni Dupré, is worth telling and remembering: One day, in the studio of Magi, I and another young man were modelling together a man's *torso*. A friend of Magi, a painter, as he passed by us, paused, and, after looking at our two copies, said, turning to my rival and patting him gently on the shoulder, "I am delighted; this is an artist!" Then, turning to me, with an expression of regret, he said: "*A rivederla:*" "I shall see you again"—equal to the French "*au revoir.*" But it has also a slightly sarcastic meaning. My good reader, do you think that made me despair? No, by the Lord! I tell you rather that these words were seared upon my brain as with a red-hot iron, and there they still remain, and they did me a great deal of good. The professor who spoke them (yes, he was a professor), three years afterwards embraced me in the Accademia delle Belle Arti, before my "Abel." My rival is perfectly sound in health, and is fatter and more vigorous than I am; but he is not a sculptor. So, my dear young artist, courage!

* * * * *

I have lately heard of a gentleman who, after a most active, industrious, and varied business career, succeeded in making a fortune after he had attained his sixtieth year. He had been a clerk in New York City; had then opened a store in a Long Island town; kept at this for years, until success seemed impossible; then sold out for a few hundred dollars, and went West, where he bought lots at ten dollars each, opened a land-office, and went into real estate; succeeded while the boom lasted, but went down again when it subsided; bought a farm and worked it for years, but succumbed

to the blizzards and the grasshoppers; again sold out and went to California, where he succeeded in business sufficiently well to marry and set up housekeeping; after which his wife died, and business again failed; moved to Oregon and got a political office there, which he held until the wrong party came into power; and then returned to New York, fifty years old, and began clerking again. But now he had had experience; he had become careful and cautious; had learned to work well; and he got into favour with his employers, who promoted him to the position of head clerk; at sixty he became a partner, and in five years amassed a respectable fortune, sufficient to enable him to retire and live like a gentleman for the rest of his life.

Now, what does this story teach us? First, that a man need not despair because he is sixty years old; nay, he may, rightly considered, regard his chances as better than ever. For, if a man has the right stuff in him, he will be a far wiser man at that age than he ever was before, and act accordingly. I often hear it said: "They don't want an old man now; the cry is for young blood." Well, let them cry what they please; but an ounce of wisdom, a grain of prudence, is worth a ton of young blood. Secondly, a young man is not generally the safest; the big losses are usually made by young bloods; the fortunes by men of mature years. True wisdom begins at about forty; all the years before are training and tentative years; it is only after that age, sometimes after forty, that a man begins to take sound views of life, moves slowly but surely, and finally "gets there"—winds up with a name and a fortune worth having. Most men strive for "more, more" until they land in bankruptcy.

* * * * *

The editor of the *British Weekly* and the *Bookman* of London is one of the best known of the little coterie of Scotch journalists in London. During his experience as editor, contributor and author, Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll has been thrown into contact with many interesting and eminent personalities, and a book of personal recollections from him could not but be entertaining and instructive.

In the volume, "The Key of the Blue Closet," Dr. Nicoll says of himself: "Personally, I am not skilled in conversation, but I pride myself on a certain knack in asking questions. In this way much has come to me, and many things that were not asked for. You might not care for them, but I take pleasure in thinking that John Leech, when he died, left behind him forty pairs of trousers and forty-six pots of cayenne pepper. I like to know that Professor Cowell bought one boot at a time, and that an elastic-sided boot." It is this talent for noting immediately, and remembering, the little interesting bits of information about persons and things—things, perhaps, not necessarily of great importance—that must have contributed in a large degree to Dr. Nicoll's success as a journalist."

Curran, the Irish lawyer, was once cross-questioning an infamous witness in a certain trial. "Now, tell me, is there anybody in this court whom you would not dispose of for a consideration?" "Oh! now then, but it isn't your honour that I would do any harm to." "And why?" "Why, sir, I wouldn't be offending your honour with the rason." "You must answer the question," says the judge. "Why, then, sure it's because of the wart on his nose, which is how the Divil has set his mark on him for his own!"

* * * * *

Mr. Thackeray, who is a most entertaining and lovable companion, was delivering his lectures on the Four Georges in London when Miss Brontë, the authoress of "Jane Eyre," came to town to hear and to see him. Thackeray arranged a dinner in her honour, to which he invited several lady authors to meet her, as well as one or two of his especial intimates. This dinner was not a great success, which was perhaps owing to Miss Brontë's inability to fall in with the easy badinage of the well-bred people with whom she felt herself surrounded.

"Alert-minded and keen-brained herself," says the biographer of Mrs. Brookfield, "she was accustomed only to the narrow literalness of her own circle, and could scarcely have understood the rapid give and take, or the easy conventional grace of these new friends. Also she may hardly have appreciated the charming conciseness with which they told their stories; for the members of this set were the first to break away from the pedantic ponderousness usual with all great talkers, even those of their own time; and Miss Brontë, a square peg in a round hole, was doubtless, too, dismayed at anecdotes that gained in elegance as they lost in accuracy."

* * * * *

Have you ever noticed what a dreary thing it is to read a book of nothing but witticisms? It is something "whereof a little more than a little is by much too much." Is it not singular that Charles Lamb, in his famous Essay on Roast Pig, never once expresses any sympathy for the poor young pigs that are roasted alive? Can any one laugh at this story?

As for poor Sheridan, does the perusal of his studied

witticisms excite anything more than a melancholy smile? Poor Sherry! he was a man worthy of better and nobler things, and but for his titled and noble friends, he would have been a great and glorious man, full of true wit, humor, and sound sense. But the Prince Regent and his riotous company ruined him, just as it did many others. Here is one of his typical witticisms, gotten off probably in the fashionable company at Brooks's:

> The Prince came in and said 'twas winter,
> Then put to his head the rummer;
> When *swallow* after *swallow* came,
> And then he pronounced it summer!

Imagine the guffaw that followed this witty sally! These were the glorious flush days when fame and fortune followed him; but what of those days when he was left alone, poor, penniless, sick and utterly neglected?

* * * * *

When Sir Richard Owen, the anatomist, was in humble circumstances at Lancaster, he wished to possess himself of the head of a negro who had been executed there, and repaired to the jail to procure it after nightfall. Having secured his prize and placed it in a blue bag, he was tripping down a street which descended somewhat steeply from the prison, and the night being frosty and slippery and the bag imperfectly tied, Owen slipped and let fall the bag, on which the head fell out and went bounding and bouncing down the street, till it arrived at a row of houses at right angles to the steep hill, where was a door

partly open. Against this door the head came like a cannon ball and leaped into the midst of a party of women drinking tea! Owen followed it and secured the thing again and bolted, leaving the women in terror lest he had come to cut their heads off!

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